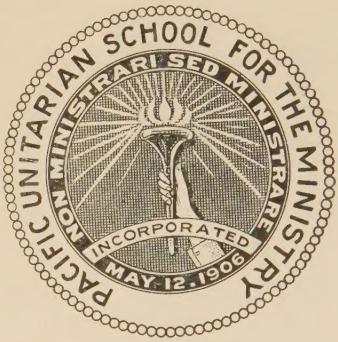

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[No. 81]

IS FUTURE PUNISHMENT EVERLASTING?

BY

REV. SAMUEL C. BEANE.

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"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

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IS FUTURE PUNISHMENT EVERLASTING?

ARE THERE FEW THAT BE SAVED? — *Luke* xiii: 23.

ASSUMING, as we do, an existence for all men after death, the most serious question which follows is, What have we to hope or fear beyond this life, for the worst, the lowest, and most unpromising of our kind? Or, using a well-coined phrase, What is the doom of the wicked?

In trying to throw a little light upon this subject, I shall speak first to those who look chiefly to the Bible for instruction in such matters, and then briefly consider some of those grounds of faith and hope which are in our own natures and in the nature of things.

I. Most Christians go very far back for their sighting-ground on this great question, to the story in Genesis of what is called the sin of Adam and the fall of Man, wherein it is shown, as they think, that the entire human race is in a ruined condition, under the wrath of God, from which escape is provided for those who will accept it in the gospel and death of Jesus.

But a few words of comment may well be spoken on this story of "The Fall." First, it is without name or date, and the utmost efforts of scholars have failed to discover when and where it originated. It occurs in Genesis, but Genesis is evidently a collection of the short writings of several authors, each distinguished by his particular style and use of words, but no one signing his name, or giving any clew to it. Moreover, the story reads like a

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production of earlier date than written history, rather than a bundle of strict historical statements. Many scholars have come to believe that it is a poetic legend, or allegory, of ancient date, but brought by the Hebrews from Babylon at the close of their captivity, a comparatively late period in their career.

But, again, if you will carefully read the story, forgetting the dogmatic interpretations which have been put upon it, I doubt whether you will find any fall of Adam, or fall of anybody. The word "fall" is not used; and when the first pair are said to be expelled from the Garden, it seems very much like you and me when we ceased to be children, and were sent forth from the nursery, where our idleness had begun to produce mischief, into the real world of real life,— not for our punishment, but because we had grown too large to be treated longer as babes. No curse of God is said to descend on the first man and woman: they are simply put to work to earn their own living and take their share of responsibility, and the ground, it is said, is "cursed" or hardened for their sake, just, we may suppose, as you give your growing child rugged tasks and cares in order to make a man of him.

Well, come down through the history of the Jews as pictured in the books of the Old Testament. Adam's sin and fall, carrying the whole race to ruin with him, if it were a supposed fact, must needs have been a matter of constant and most serious interest, especially as the Jews were the most religious of peoples. What, then, do we find? Take the complete concordance and look through the Old Testament, from the end of Genesis to the last word of the last book, and the name of Adam is found but twice, — once in the book of Deuteronomy, and once in the poem of Job, — and both these times only in the way of literary allusion. "The Fall of Man" was clearly

not one of the doctrines taught by the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament.

We come now to the gospel of the New Testament and hearken to Jesus. Surely he will set forth this dire catastrophe of the first parent. It will, indeed, be the burden of his thought; for has he not come into the world to undo the terrible lapse and ruin of the human race? Listen, then. What do you hear from the Great Teacher? Not a sentence or a syllable on the subject from the day of his birth until his departure from the world. The record does not tell us that he ever spoke the word "Adam," or alluded to our first parents, or intimated that there had ever been a fall of man. Well, it would seem that an event or a doctrine which no prophet or psalmist of the Old Testament ever mentions and which Jesus passes by in absolute silence, does not demand very much attention on Bible or Christian grounds. The Christian of to-day, if he follows the example of his Master, will let the matter entirely alone.

But, it is said, Jesus did teach the everlasting punishment of the wicked. Let us see. There is a Greek adjective, *aionios*, which, in three instances, he is represented as using to describe the retributions of sin. This Greek word is capable of being spoken of things which are everlasting, though in a vast majority of cases, as used in the Bible and other books, it is applied to things which endure only for a while. It is an adjective from the noun *aion*, meaning "an age," its English form being *eonian*. Saint Jerome says that *aion* signifies "an age" (*unum sæculum*). Josephus, the Jewish historian, calls Herod's Temple *eonian*, although it no longer existed at the time of his writing. Saint Chrysostom writes, "Satan's kingdom is *eonian* — that is, will cease with this present world."

Coming to modern times, Dr. Isaac Watts, the hymn-writer and Bible-student, says we ought not, when speaking

of men and other creatures, "positively to affirm that their existence shall be equal to that of the Blessed God, especially with regard to duration of punishments." Jeremy Taylor wrote, "Everlasting signifies only to the end of its own proper period." Professor Moses Stuart, for so many years an honored teacher in the Andover Theological Seminary, says of *aionios*, "The different shades by which the word is rendered depend on the object with which *aionios* is associated." Canon Charles Kingsley, of the Church of England, writes thus, "The word *aion* is never used in Scripture or anywhere else in the sense of endlessness. . . . It always meant, both in Scripture and out, a period of time." These all, except Josephus the Jew, are accredited teachers of the Christian Church, and all reputed as Orthodox or Evangelical men. I could quote at great length from similar unquestioned sources, reaching from Saint Origen in the third century to Archdeacon Farrar in the nineteenth, to show that *aionios* does not express particular duration at all, but means in a general way, "pertaining to an age or period." A signal instance of such meaning is found in the seventh verse of Jude, where the destruction of Tyre and Sidon, which is represented as occupying but a single day, is called "the punishment of eternal (*aionios*) fire." From this usage it sometimes acquires the secondary meaning of "inherent," "intrinsic," or "spiritual," as distinguished from considerations of duration and other circumstances.

I am aware that there are scholars of reputation who still insist that the word in some cases necessarily means everlasting, but these are fewer in number and, as a rule, inferior in Biblical learning to those who take the other view.

Now consider this: The congregations that Jesus addresses, so far as the record shows, seem to be composed

largely of Pharisees and Sadducees; probably some representatives of the other classes of the Jewish people at that day were present, but only Pharisees and Sadducees seem conspicuous. Jesus and his biographers appear to regard them as the most important part of his hearers, and to them his discourses are very largely addressed. Now, the Sadducees, as we know, either disbelieved in a life beyond this or ignored the subject altogether. The Pharisees, at this time, believed in future existence, and added to this belief the conviction that all Jews who did not forfeit their Jewish birthright by some treason or disloyalty — all Jews who remained Jews to the end of their lives — were sure of resurrection to everlasting happiness. They believed, or many did, that the heathens were doomed to wander as dim shades in the underworld, and to be tortured there, but that all loyal Jews, either by transmigration or in some other way, were sure of endless felicity. Here, then, was an audience of men, a considerable and very important part of whom did not believe that the soul survives the body's death, and of whom the other principal part had no thought that they or any of theirs were in any danger of an unhappy doom in the world to come. The doctrine of everlasting punishment, as affecting the destiny of either of these two classes of his hearers, must have been, therefore, a thing entirely new to them. Jesus, according to the theory, was declaring to these uninstructed men predictions of the greatest catastrophe which could possibly befall them, unimaginable and sickening in its horrors; and every man he spoke to was in instant danger of this fate which words cannot describe, and from which no escape, save that which he could offer them, would be possible. And yet it was a peril of which no one of them had ever thought as possible to himself. Think carefully of this, and then we

will turn to these further facts. Supposing that Jesus' words mean actually endless punishment, he never, by the record, alluded to the matter but three times in all his three years' ministry; all he is reported to have said could have occupied no more than two or three minutes by the clock; and whether he actually said anything on the subject depends on the meaning of a variable word, which, in a large majority of cases, is applied to things which are not everlasting. We may add to this that the gospels of Luke and John do not record that Jesus ever spoke this word at all, or any word applied to punishment which can possibly signify its endlessness.

I am aware that other passages are sometimes quoted than those which contain this adjective, but only in a secondary way, these three passages in Matthew and Mark being the main and indispensable columns of the doctrine in question. Without these, it would never have occurred to Christians that everlasting punishment is taught in the New Testament.

Perhaps, however, I ought to speak of two or three other expressions which are regarded by many as *corroborating* the doctrine of endless punishment. The Greek word for punishment in Matthew xxv., above alluded to, is *kolasis,* the expression being *kolasis aionios.* But the most superficial student of the language, as well as the most profound, is aware that this noun involves the idea of correction, pruning, or discipline; and only by straining it far beyond its original and current meaning can the idea of torment, other than for amendment and restoration, be associated with it.

The words translated "hell," too, should have a moment's consideration. The Old Testament word *Sheol,* thus rendered, means simply the underworld of spirits good and bad, and no unbiassed scholar, I believe, claims

that it has any necessary reference to punishment. In Genesis xxxvii., Jacob is represented as saying: "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Here the word translated grave, is *Sheol*, meaning the place or state of the dead. The common version renders it, in the sixty-five cases where it occurs in the Old Testament, thirty-one times as "grave," thirty-one times as "hell," and three as "pit." It does not really mean "hell" in a single case, nor indeed "grave," but it would be no less improper in either instance to render it by the one word than by the other. How would it seem, then, to represent Jacob as saying: "I will go down into *hell* unto my son mourning?"

In the New Testament, the two words *Hades* and *Gehenna* are translated "hell." *Hades* here occurs eleven times, in ten of which it is rendered "hell." In the remaining instance it is translated "grave:" "O grave, where is thy victory?" No person, to my knowledge, has ever successfully or even seriously attempted to show why *Hades* should not always be understood as the equivalent of *Sheol*, meaning "the underworld." But surely if it can be translated "grave" in this one instance, it could equally well be so rendered in the other eleven. And there is no reason, if the word "hell" expresses its meaning in the ten cases, why we should not render the eleventh, "Oh hell, where is thy victory?"

Gehenna, which is spoken of twelve times, is the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where the worship of Moloch had at times been celebrated, which had been used as a city cesspool, and where, according to some authorities, the city had long kept a bonfire for the destruction of its offal and refuse. Of course every reference to the place in connection with the thought of punishment must be purely metaphorical, as no one is known to have been

actually punished there. Very naturally, it would seem, from its later uses, the idea of correction and purification became associated with the spot. Saint Origen, who made a thorough study of this matter in his scriptural investigations, declared that he had found that the Jews metaphorically associated the idea of future punishment with this valley, *because* it suggested to them purification and correction. At all events, there is no instance in the New Testament where either *Gehenna* or *Hades* is described as everlasting.

There is another word still, which, in one instance, in the second chapter of 2 Peter, is translated "hell," namely *Tartarus,* a word borrowed from pagan mythology, and in this case clearly used to express an event of temporary duration.

Every reader can judge for himself with what reason or moral right translators of the Scriptures can thus play fast and loose with these words, no one of which ever meant "hell," and which, to suit doctrinal emergencies, King James's translators seem to render in whatever way best suits their present strait or prejudice.

Now, if any one can think that Jesus, foreseeing this awful fate into which almost every one of his hearers was surely destined to fall unless warned and rescued by him, and into which any one of them might plunge at any moment, yet could spare but so small a part of his time to speak of the matter, while he discoursed at length on other subjects, and even then suspended the doctrine on a word, or a few words, of so uncertain meaning that the unbiassed student is at least left in great doubt whether he ever meant everlasting punishment, — if any one can think this of Jesus, I do not envy him his mental attitude toward the Master. Under this view, Jesus would seem a heartless trifler with men's dearest interests. If I had

been living at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and had for three years foreseen without a doubt that the fearful disaster was coming to that place which actually befell it a few months ago; but if, in all those years, though mingling freely with the people, I had alluded to their impending peril but three times in a way which would cause anybody to note it down, and then only momentarily, and in such indefinite terms as left it doubtful whether, indeed, I had ever spoken of the matter at all, — do you think the survivors of that catastrophe would bless me now as their benefactor, and their savior from danger?

II. Coming to the other point of view, that of reason and human nature and the nature of things, we see three possible destinies after death, for imperfect and evil men. First, everlasting imperfection and punishment; second, annihilation; third, improvement and final perfection. There can be but these three possibilities in the case, — endless moral and spiritual wretchedness, going on from bad to worse forever; the extinction of personal being; and the development of such new powers of good in every soul, under the fresh influences and advantages of another life, that all men shall finally achieve the high purpose for which they were evidently intended.

Consider now, the first possibility, that of being kept alive in hopeless wickedness and torture. Of course, if this thing is to be, it will be because the Creator and Father of mankind devised and intended it as a part of his great plan — foresaw it and was pleased with it as one of the possible fates of his children. He might have planned otherwise, — for all things are under his absolute control, — but he did not; this was one of the things at which he smiled approval, and called it very good. Well, a being who could do this, cannot possibly be loved or venerated or trusted by a human heart. There are no

words in any language to express every true man's moral abhorrence of an Almighty Being who should permit his almightiness to sleep while millions of his creatures — ay, of his own children — are allowed to rush on to everlasting wickedness and torture; who, indeed, deliberately planned this possibility and probability as his own pleasure. I could quote page after page from the writings of excellent men who have felt themselves bound to hold this doctrine, showing how it violated and lacerated every moral and benevolent instinct of their natures. Listen a moment to noble Albert Barnes, the distinguished Orthodox preacher and philanthropist of the last generation, whose Notes on the Scriptures are in so many of our homes. "I have never seen a particle of light," he says, "thrown on these subjects, that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind. . . . I confess, when I look on a world of sinners and of sufferers; upon death-beds and graveyards; when I see my friends, my parents, my family, my people, my fellow-citizens; when I look upon a whole race, all involved in this sin and danger, and when I see the great mass of them wholly unconcerned, and when I feel that God only can save them, and yet he does not do it, — I am struck dumb. It is all dark, dark, dark to my soul, and I cannot disguise it." In a like strain, the late Professor Moses Stuart, of Andover, voiced the piercing cry of thousands of the finest souls: "Can heaven itself be a place of happiness for them, while they are conscious that a husband or a wife, or a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, is plunged into a lake of fire from which there is no escape?" I will not tax your sympathies by further quotations. To a Liberal Christian, these horrors are a hideous but fleeting shadow; while to the Orthodox Christian, if he actually believes his creed, they are a ghastly reality. I have never met a person of

any faith who would confess to me that this doom for the wicked seemed either merciful or reasonable.

Well, what do we always say of a proposition which contradicts the constitution of man, — the constitutions and the faculties of all sound and enlightened men, — like this, for instance, that two and two make five, that the part is greater than the whole, that hate is more beautiful than love, or disease fairer than health? How do we always treat such propositions? We simply *deny them, trample upon them, and turn our faces the other way.* So do I turn my face from this monstrous affirmation concerning God and man, which fights against everything noble and true and merciful in the human soul.

But I hear some one say, Why is everlasting misery for bad men any less merciful or reasonable than temporary punishment and pain? If the penalty of evil is so cruel when drawn out through eternity, why is it not equally or at least very cruel when it lasts but a day? The question hardly needs an answer. There is, *in quality* and *meaning*, all the difference in the world between *temporary* pain and penalty *made endless.* A child, for example, carelessly pricks its finger. For a moment it suffers hurt; but then from that little accident it derives two benefits, — first, it learns a lesson of care and caution; and, second, the remainder of the day, and perhaps other days, will seem all the happier and brighter because of contrast with the temporary smart, so that this happening would appear to be no misfortune whatever, but really a contribution to the child's wisdom and happiness. Again, a person carelessly contracts an illness, and is shut up in a darkened sick-room for weeks or months. I was talking with one such lately, and this is the substance of his testimony: "I learned in those weary weeks lessons which are more valuable than a financial fortune. I learned for the first

time to appreciate health, and now for the first time I breathe the out-door air and bathe in the sunshine with a spirit of thankfulness. I have, moreover, taken my first serious lesson in learning what an exquisite structure this body is, and in giving it care and reverence. Strength, freedom, friends, work, — all have come to have a new relish, and to be religiously prized."

Again, a man goes wrong in this life, and all the way through, — makes a perpetual mistake ; walks crooked paths of meanness, transgression, and vice. And he dies without recovering himself, in the midst of his transgressions and errors. Well, let us suppose that he wakes up the next morning in another sphere of existence, under new scenes and conditions. He has got rid of his besotted body, for one thing, which was a constant temptation to vice. He is now out of his earthly career, and can look in and down upon it from the outside, seeing himself for the first time as others saw him. He realizes his guilt; he comes to hate his old life and his old self; and pained and tortured he turns away, and begins to struggle up the path which leads through a hundred hells or purgatories to heaven. A terrible experience is before him, — this climbing out of the pit he had himself digged, this slow and almost desperate making up for lost opportunities ; but on and on he goes, through, it may be, a thousand or ten thousand years of struggle and suffering. And at length he will have climbed the height; he will be a soul again, and not a brute; and beauty and glory and peace will have come to his life. Well, those thousand or ten thousand years of his disciplinary retribution and struggle are in comparison with the eternity beyond only like the child's momentary prick of its finger compared with the long day that followed. Light is beyond, compensation, blessing forevermore.

But where will you get the first ray of light, the first thought of compensation or satisfaction, out of *endless* punishment and torment? It is black, hopeless, hateful, from head to foot.

But it is sometimes said that this doctrine is needed to deter men from wickedness in this world; and a good friend once said to me that, while she did not believe the doctrine, she thought it should be preached, if possible, as a preventive of sin and crime. But is it, when professed and preached, a preventive of sin and crime, — a restraint upon evil-doing? The census which has from time to time been taken in our prisons does not confirm this, but rather shows that nearly all of our incarcerated criminals had been brought up in religious communions or communities where they received whatever benefit the doctrine of endless punishment could render them.

Which of the two beliefs, indeed, would seem to have the more restraining power? The Orthodox Christian has always held to the possibility of a bad transgressor so repenting at the last hour as to escape all future punishments, his long life of sin leaving no mark or stain on his soul, and not diminishing in the least his enjoyment of the heavenly state. But the Liberal Christian believes in no such late escape from the consequences of evil. He believes and teaches that no transgressor of heaven's law shall be excused till he has expiated his transgression to the full. He says to his own soul, and to others, in the language of Jesus, "Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing." The Liberal Christian sees no way of avoiding the penalties of a sin, when once the sin has been committed. The transgressor's only hope is in enduring the natural and beneficent retribution of his deeds, and being thus saddened and disciplined into a better life. Does not Liberal Christianity, then, offer by far the stronger curb against wickedness?

The Liberal Christian complains of the Orthodox system, that it admits men of low and evil life too easily and costlessly into everlasting happiness, and that it holds out encouragement of escaping altogether the retribution of a career of heinous sin. Who is there, indeed, holding the Orthodox views, who does not mean and expect before he dies to make such provision, even in an hour's time, as shall render the future life as blessed to him as it will be to the most blameless and upright of mankind? Can such a system offer the moral restraint and stimulus which are needed by tempted and erring human beings?

And then the fate of those who do not thus anticipate their death and annul their penalties is so monstrous and shocking that it is very rarely viewed as an actual or possible fact. How few people ever allow that *their* relative, or friend, or neighbor is everlastingly lost! I have known but two persons who believed that one who was dear to them had gone down to endless misery. One of these was made insane, and the other was driven by her terrible experience of the dogma to investigate the grounds of her faith anew, — a course which led her into Liberal Christianity. Ah, it is an inhuman dogma, one which will not bear to be turned to actual fact, and which for this reason offers little or no restraint against evil! There is no word in our language whose utterance in a religious connection carries to the people's minds less of the sense of reality than the word "hell."

It is only the Liberal Christian who denounces to every evil person and evil deed penalties which are *instant, sure*, and *inexorable*, and from which no man shall come out until he has paid the last farthing.

I cannot dwell upon the second possibility, — namely, that of the annihilation of the wicked. Many excellent people have adopted this view as more merciful than the

former, and there are certain facts of experience and observation which almost suggest that some persons may by evil lives so weaken and destroy their higher faculties that when their bodies die there shall not be enough of the spiritual surviving to enable them to go on as living and individual organisms in another state of existence. This belief has in it some grains of reason and many a grain of mercy; and it cannot be doubted that it has enabled a considerable number of people, when tortured by the thought of endless woe for a majority of their fellow-creatures, to retain their religious faith, and to some it has been the means of retaining their mental sanity.

But I turn from this view to one more reasonable still, and far more just and merciful, — that which contemplates the ultimate perfection of even the worst of mankind. And here the first fact which greets us is that retribution is in its very nature corrective. In human hands punishment is often unlike and foreign to the deed committed. It frequently inflicts pain of some kind — of any kind, indeed — to restrain and terrify evil-doers, without regard to reforming any. But in the Divine realm punishment appears to be always a medicine, and to flow out of the sin itself. If I tell an untruth, I am not by the infinite court fined so many dollars, or incarcerated so many months; but I have the untruth I have been guilty of, root and stalk and branch and bud and fruit. I have the shame and disgust of my deed, the remorse and regret, the forfeited reputation for veracity; I appear ugly in my own eyes; and everything conspires, not merely to pain me, but, like a friend, to bid and drive me away from that sin, to make it bitter and hateful to me, so that I shall not repeat it. The drunkard grows gross and repulsive to look upon, and his nights of inebriation produce days of

discomfort and self-loathing. The voluptuary of every sort finds that his appetites and passions, when overstimulated, give him less and less enjoyment, each abused sense and proclivity of his being thus changed into a prophet of heaven, proclaiming, "This is the way of death, and not of life and peace." And so every divine retribution for sin which I can call to mind seems to be a natural and kindly one, springing for our safety out of the very evil done or indulged, the sin's other self, and with remedy and restoration in it. I cannot think of a punishment which God or Nature inflicts upon us which is of the character of *gratuitous pain*, — pain with no tendency to warning or recuperation. Our legislatures are of late enacting some of their severest laws against cruelty, against the infliction of pain by a parent upon his child, except for obvious purposes of discipline and correction. Even in our prisons all tortures and gratuitous penalties are forbidden.

Now, many times this kindly medicine of retribution does not here and now work the intended cure. It takes some men a long time to learn moral lessons, as it does others to learn mathematics. Moral restoratives do not seem to work swiftly upon some natures, as the physician's best prescription acts less rapidly upon one constitution than upon another. But here is the point: Given a thousand years, a million years, *an eternity*, and is it not sure enough that, in the hands of the Infinite Physician, these divinely appointed remedies for sin will accomplish upon all the perfect results for which they are intended? Why, *in this world* nine tenths of the people, no matter how badly they may have erred and strayed during some part of their lives, come pretty well up to the moral standard as they grow older. With fully nine tenths of the people in our own communities the divine cure

which is within retribution does largely effect its purpose, so that this great majority go out of life with a reputable character and a manly or womanly dignity. And can we not trust the eternities to restore the other tenth?

How, as civilization improves, as human love and goodness abound, our home discipline and the discipline of the State are changed; how the influences and atmospheres of our schools and of our prisons are renovated! Once it was thought enough to inflict pain vindictively, "to balance the deed;" but now the thought in home and school and prison is how kindly and benevolently to apply the cure of evil, and strengthen the transgressor against temptations to come. And men, as more and more they do this themselves, are coming more and more to demand it and expect it of their Father in heaven, and will not be satisfied if at last one sinner is to be left over unpitied and unrestored.

And among all the miracles and wonders of the nineteenth century nothing is more astonishing or sublime than the revelations of the power of human love, when brought by a wise and truly sympathetic person to bear upon a life of transgression or of weak moral powers, to recharge it with strength and courage. Some persons whom I know seem never to fail of helping sinners and stumblers out of their woe; and need we have a doubt that, in the endless years, God and his human children, changed into angels of love and mercy, will accomplish for all men what is achieved for so very many even in this short lifetime?

Again, if a person should go on forever repeating his vices and transgressions, sinking constantly into evil, would there not come a time, judging by all human experience, when he would become so morally callous and inert that no divine punishment would pain him? We

know how hardened men grow by long continued habits of evil. Some persons of my acquaintance have so benumbed themselves that they seem almost incapable of remorse or shame. Now we will suppose that a bad man continues for a very long time without reform, without being brought to his moral and spiritual senses; does not everything we see and know make it almost certain that he will some time reach a point where nothing will trouble his moral nature, where the sufferings of retribution will be impossible? I believe, from what I constantly see, that for a person to go on in increasing evil beyond a certain limit would quite destroy his moral sensibility, and change him into a stone. Everlasting moral torment, then, would seem impossible in the nature of things. The benumbed man, or the annihilated man, would escape the pains of punishment. Only the soul that is kept morally alive and quick, that feels contrition and shame, in whom the saving and restoring pangs are ever at work, — only this soul is capable of receiving divine chastisement. For this reason, if no other, I believe that every bad man is destined to reform his life. It cannot be that under a perfect plan he will be allowed to follow an evil career, and then to creep off into a state of final insensibility. If there be justice on the earth and in the heavens, this escape from retribution will not be possible. The freezing man is happy in his stupor, and would gladly be let alone by his fellows to sink away and die in painless unconsciousness; his suffering commences the moment he begins to come back to life. So a bad man's dearest craving might be to be let alone by the Divine hand, that he might swoon away pleasantly out of the remembrance of himself and his misdeeds. But, no! we must all come back to life, to our higher natures, to saving retribution, to redeeming pains. Every step I take downward I must, *ay*, *must*, retrace. And in this neces-

sity of painful return justice and mercy, penalty and cure, join hands and kiss each other.

And my final thought, already hinted, is that everybody as he grows large and grandly human, as he unfolds his nobler and sweeter manhood, demands this better fate for all men. No thoughtful person I have ever known has been able to adjust himself happily to the idea of annihilation, or that of endless wretchedness, as the culmination of human life. As men and women improve morally and religiously, they expect higher things of their Heavenly Father, — have nobler and grander hopes for their fellow-men. Men of largest faith and hope and love cannot tolerate the thought of endless evil or endless nothingness, as the best fate God could provide for the mass of his children beyond this world.

Well, friends, let us rise up to this larger, more reasonable, and more merciful faith. It will make us stronger and braver, fuller of sweet affections and generous helpfulness. *Eternal life, eternal love, eternal hope,* — without these existence is a doubtful good, nay, a positive calamity.

Glad and strong is he who vitally believes —

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete;
> That not a worm is cloven in vain,
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last — far off — at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring."

SMOKE AND THE FLAME, THE

A Study in the Development of Religion. By Charles F. Dole

Size, 4 3-4 x 7 inches; pages, 230; price, 80 cents *net;* postage, 7 cents.

THE suggestive title of this book originates in the author's happy illustration of the undeveloped religious ideas of the early ages of the Christian era as the green fuel which gave rise to the dense theological smoke preceding the purer flame of higher and truer spiritual ideals. The gradually dawning modern conception of God and nature and man is seen to be "the slow coming to consciousness of the divine ideal of humanity when the life of the spirit submerges old theological barriers in its interest for goodness, brotherhood, and mutual helpfulness." The process and the progress of this growth in religious life and thought are traced step by step in the slow change of centuries from the old religion to the new. "The history of religion," as is well said in the introduction, "has been a wonderful development, like the history of art, of science, of government. We cannot understand the religion of our own time, much less know what we ought practically to do with it, and to which side, party, or church we belong, unless we know something of the long world-processes through which religion has passed into its various modern forms."

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By James Walker

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THESE sermons were for the most part delivered in the college chapel to the students of Harvard University. A man of keen intellectual powers and great strength of character, Dr. Walker preached with deep conviction and abounding sympathy. Clearness of thought, force of logic, attractiveness of rhetoric, richness of diction, were all combined for the purpose of making plain his convictions of right and duty.

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Size, 5 1-4 x 7; pages, 379; price, 75 cents *net;* postage, 11 cents.

EACH page is made up of a selection from Scripture, a hymn, and a prayer, furnishing for each day of the year a brief devotional service. The poetical selections forming the hymns are gathered from all accessible sources: the prayers are taken in the main from the ancient liturgies.

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[No. 82]

THE

LOGIC OF PRAYER.

BY

REV. JOHN CUCKSON.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

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"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE LOGIC OF PRAYER.

For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him. — Hebrews xi. 6.

No religious truth or principle or habit that rests upon a secure basis ever loses anything by close investigation. The one thing religion has to fear is not knowledge, but ignorance, — not inquiry, but indifference and neglect. The worst foes of faith are not the sceptics, but the worldlings. That which is based upon fact and experience can always afford to be challenged; you may look into it and under it and around it, and it will survive the keenest scrutiny. Religion, properly understood, solicits neither apologies nor concessions, but patient and fearless research. It is in this spirit that we would examine into the *raison d'être* of those universal instincts of wonder, reverence, worship, which find a normal outlet in prayer. The laws of our spiritual nature do not forbid such inquiry, for they are just as open to research as the laws of the physical world. Absolute knowledge is not to be acquired in one or the other; but approximate truth is accessible in both, and in all essential respects by precisely the same processes; that is, by the use of all the faculties of our nature, — the senses, the intellect, the conscience, the religious affections. We are invited to see things with the entire soul, and through every avenue or inlet or instrument which is turned toward the universe in which we live, — not with the eye of sense alone, nor

yet exclusively by the cold light of reason, nor wholly by the religious sentiments, but through each and all of these many windows out of which the human soul has ever looked upon life.

The Psalmist says, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come;" and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that he who "cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." It is clear, then, that prayer is conscious approach to God. It is an attitude of the soul in the presence of One with whom there is the certainty of communion, and it is an approach with a purpose. It does not necessarily suggest a localization of deity; but it does imply the contact of one soul with another soul, — a fellowship between two persons possessing attributes akin, and alike, if not in degree, at least in kind. Prayer is not a relation between things, but between persons, who may and do find each other out. As a spiritual experience, it is distinct from the amazement with which the astronomer gazes into the vast expanse of heaven, or the rapture with which the artist glows before a landscape, a statue, or a picture. It is not a mere ecstasy that rises and falls, begins and ends, in the soul which feels it. We do not pray when we soliloquize or indulge in reverie, or mechanically go through a round of set performances; that is not prayer. Worship to be genuine must have a reality, directness, vitality of reciprocal personal feeling and influence, such as can only exist between one personality and another. We do not enter into the spirit of prayer when we contemplate mechanical forces or laws, whether singly or collectively, no matter how much we may endow these impersonal quantities. We may fear them or admire them, — fear them when they are maleficent, or admire them when they are beautiful; but the soul does not turn its hungering needs to them, or show its love or shed its tears in their

presence. None of the feelings which enter into prayer is kindled by an unconscious something, we know not what, which, for some reason we cannot understand, is mysteriously developing itself in the universe. We proffer no request to a mere idol of the mind; we do not offer our gratitude, reverence, trust, obedience to an inscrutable and omnipotent something. Dispense with belief in an Infinite Mind that thinks, wills, loves, and holds personal relations with mankind, and substitute therefor an impersonal something, less than ourselves in the scale of being and not greater, and to all intents and purposes prayer is a futility. Personality is the most perfect attribute of being with which we are acquainted. It may be inadequate for the purpose to which we put it when we apply it to God; but until some higher conception dawns upon us, we are not likely to relinquish it. And so prayer is an act in which one person comes to another for a purpose. It is the language of the soul to him upon whom it depends. It is the sesame of recognition between the Spirit who is everywhere and the soul that clings to the Eternal. That is the logic of prayer. There is a God from whom no barriers can keep us, who is accessible to each; and to come to him is not necessarily to go to this place or to that, but to be vividly conscious of his presence and to feel that in him there is a response to our need, our suffering, our affection, our penitence.

Such belief is indispensable to the validity of prayer, for "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." Let there be any hesitation or uncertainty about this, and prayer will soon cease to be a normal habit of the soul. But, once assured of this, nothing is more natural, nothing more beautiful. Then we feel that our words light upon a listening ear, our sighs provoke a sympathy which comes to our aid, even our unspoken thoughts and emotions are not lost in a

dreary solitude, but are known to him with whom we have to do. Then all that we ask is not, Does God hear prayer? but, Can he be indifferent to the cries and tears of his children? Our answer is, No. The experience of men in all ages goes to prove that there is a divine response to human need. Our expressions of gratitude and our longings for help and guidance are not purposeless mockeries, kindled only to be quenched, provoked only to be defrauded. The very act of prayer would often seem to be the appointed channel along which God comes to our relief; and suppliants in every age have received light and life and joy while the words of prayer were on their lips. Your carping criticism goes for nothing in the face of an experience which is universal; and thousands of perplexed, feeble, troubled, penitent souls will tell you with an unwavering voice, as of that which they know from manifold experience, not only that God is, but that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.

But there are prayers and prayers. It is not probable that God answers every petition that is presented to him, or that he answers prayer in the precise form in which it is presented. From all that we know it would seem as if he conditioned some benefits upon devotion and others upon toil and effort. There are blessings which come to us, not at the end of prayer, but at the end of work; there are some that answer our needs, and others that are thrown in as the gifts of a royal bounty. But there are spiritual benedictions — such as peace of mind, a new-born strength, a new-born zeal, a power of endurance, a patience under severe trial, a spirit of quiet resignation, a feeling of mysterious comfort in sorrow, a ray of hope in despondency, a flood of faith and courage in doubt and darkness — which come in answer to prayer, and which come in no other way. Prayer has lifted many a veil and lightened many a burden, healed many a wound and comforted many a grief,

which human sympathy could not touch. Again and again have bewildered and despondent men and women, to whom life was a painful problem, found when their eyes were closed in prayer, light which somehow did not come to them in the full blaze of day ; and the enigma which reason could not unravel has solved itself in the attitude and hour of prayer.

But it must not be forgotten that we are ignorant and indolent and superstitious, and often know not what to pray for. We ask amiss, or expect God to condone our offences or grant us privileges we do not merit. We break his laws, and then pray to be spared the consequences of our wrong-doing ; we are thriftless and improvident, and then pray to be relieved of the pangs of poverty ; we are reckless of our health, and then murmur when sickness overtakes us ; we court calamities, and then wonder why they come ; we cherish some selfish ambition, which if encouraged might work us harm, and pray lustily for its fulfilment, regardless of how the granting of our request may affect us or the world, of which we are only an infinitesimal portion ; we ask that advantages may come to us by chance which God confers by law. We offer irreverent prayers, which only betray our ignorance of facts with which we ought to be familiar ; we present selfish requests which a God who cares for the rest of the world cannot heed ; and often enough we beseech the Almighty to do things for us which he evidently intends that we shall do for ourselves. These are prayers to which there can be no response.

Another difficulty arises in connection with the reasonableness of prayer which cannot be overlooked. The question is often asked, " Why need we pray, when God seems to deal with us only through stable laws which prayers cannot alter ? Why pray for sunshine or for rain, when the weather that comes to us is determined long before it reaches us, and when what may be desirable for some

people may prove undesirable for others? It is surely a profitless thing to pray against a rising or a falling barometer." There is much truth in this assertion of the sovereignty of law. Prayer cannot work miracles, if by miracles we mean a violation or suspension of the laws upon which the integrity of the universe depends. But when this has been admitted, is there not some danger in these days of falling into the habit of recognizing in God nothing but law? Are we reduced to the alternative of conceiving of the world as subject to caprice, or else as lying in the lap of inflexible and relentless law? Must we deny to God the volition and spontaneity which is the cardinal prerogative of our own being? Surely God is not an infinite machine, nor is his providence mere circular movement. He is a divine being, with all the attributes of intelligence, will, eternal righteousness; and it answers neither to the facts of Nature nor to the experiences of mankind to restrict his methods, to petrify his purposes, and envelop him with the limiting bounds of law. It is true that to us he seems to work by definite methods to definite ends; but the power which originates and employs those methods can create others, or modify to its purpose those it has already made; and while much there is in the order of Nature and of life which may be referred to law, there is a large margin in which new forces are intercepted, and incalculable turns are given to events, and fresh purposes are being fulfilled. We have not so completely covered the universe with law that there is no room for the free action of an almighty will. There is no need of God working a miracle, or in anywise interfering with the operation of his own laws; but we must enlarge our conception of what law includes and remember that there are great moral and spiritual methods by which God answers prayer; and by subordinating one law to another or combining his laws he can and does meet the necessities of mankind and control the

current of human affairs. Place an inscrutable Force upon the throne of the universe, and there is no field for volition and no room for prayer; but admit that an Infinite Spirit is there that wills, thinks, and feels, and regard law as the method of his mind, and then the fervent and effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

But it is asked, "Does God need our prayers? Can he take any delight in the desires or feelings of his creatures?" Yes, if what are intelligence and sympathy and love in us be any reflection of what they are in him. It is the law of all self-conscious natures to exchange reciprocal affinities. It would be idle to expect any response to our prayers from an unconscious something with which we have nothing in common. But if the relation between ourselves and God be anything like that between an earthly parent and his children, it must delight him to know that we realize his goodness, are thankful for his kindness, and give to him the reverence and worship of our hearts. Not to do so would be unnatural. And so from the beginning until now the instinct of prayer has been the strongest instinct in our nature.

> "Not from a vain or shallow thought
> His awful Jove young Phidias brought;
> Never from lips of cunning fell
> The thrilling Delphic oracle;
> Out from the heart of Nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old;
> The litanies of nations came,
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
> Up from the burning core below, —
> The canticles of love and woe;
> The hand that rounded Peter's dome
> And groined the aisles of Christian Rome
> Wrought in a sad sincerity;
> Himself from God he could not free;
> He builded better than he knew, —
> The conscious stone to beauty grew."

Prayer has been coeval with speech; and the prayers of the ages are among the most ancient forms of language.

How are we to account for their existence? If we regard all human progress as effected through some natural correspondence between things and their environment, we cannot conceive the evolution of any powers or faculties where such correspondence has no existence. Birds could never have been evolved in the abyss of ocean; and buffaloes could not have existed before the slimy ooze in which reptiles flourished had become dry land. How, therefore, the human spirit which has prayed and reverenced and worshipped, could have been evolved without some appropriate sphere for its activity and usefulness, some forces and opportunities around to excite and draw out the religious instincts, — in a word, how a spiritual and supplicating being like man could have been evolved without a responsive and sympathetic God and a spiritual environment is a problem to which no solution can be found.

It is impossible in brief space to deal with all the questions about prayer which trouble thoughtful minds. To do this would require an exhaustive survey of religion and religious controversy. But when once the possibility of divine activity in response to man's appeal has been admitted on the one side, and the supremacy and constancy of the divine will has been recognized on the other, the main points in dispute have been conceded. All other difficulties are not of much consequence. And when we remember how one mind can influence another, how one human heart can comfort and inspire another, is it so difficult, after all, to realize the mystery of communion with God? Is it so hard to believe that he from whom we derive all our powers can flood our souls with his presence and quicken them with his energy? Or so difficult to

> "Revere the Maker; fetch thine eye
> Up to his style and manners of the sky"?

It would rather seem to be both a duty and a privilege to talk with the Unseen Friend about everything that deeply concerns us. In our exultant moods we may praise him

with joyful lips; in our penitent hours we may ask his pity and forgiveness; in the darkness of life we may cry with confidence to him for light; when burdens are heavy and trials are hard we may beseech him for strength to bear them; and when our own resources fail us, and all the props upon which we are wont to lean cease to support us, it is fitting to cast all our care upon him with the solid assurance that he careth for us.

It is true that we cannot by our prayer turn the All-Wise from his wisdom or the All-Good from his goodness, but we can and do lift ourselves into closer harmony with his wisdom and goodness, and feel all through our wills the thrill of his presence and the rapture of his love. And against these undoubted experiences of mankind it is vain to argue. Our logic may not always account for the facts; but that is not the fault of the facts. When we know from actual daily experience that in the hour of prayer a strength other than our own has stolen in upon us, a light has shone to dispel our gloom, a calm has descended upon our troubled spirits, a strange comfort has come to the relief of our sorrow, we are confident enough of the reality of our experience, though it may puzzle us fully to interpret it. And so we pray, never doubting that our prayers are heard, and that He who has built Himself an altar in every heart will send the consuming fire, and accept the offering that we bring to Him. We do not pray to bring down God, or to turn him round to our present fancies and desires, but to find uplifting and turning round ourselves in the direction of his nature. Each one among us is satisfied to worship him as his child, contented to remain —

> "Man, and nothing more, —
> Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
> And craves and deprecates, and loves and loathes,
> And bids God help him till death touch his eyes."

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[No. 83]

TEACHING

OF

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

In 1875 Philotheos Bryennios, of repute as a bishop and scholar of the Greek Church, gave a pleasant surprise to the learned world by announcing that some important early Christian manuscripts had been found by him in the Library of the Most Holy Sepulchre, — a monastery of Phanar, in Constantinople, belonging to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. These manuscripts were in Greek, on small leaves of parchment; and among them was a copy of "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," — a copy purporting to have been made, like the rest, in 1056, by a writer who signed himself "Leon, notary and sinner." It had long been known that some such document belonged to the primitive literature of the Church; but it had been given up for lost.

In 1883 Bryennios published the "Teaching," with his own elaborate notes, and numerous translations have appeared. From its archaic character and contents, and from other considerations, it is believed that the original document, which may have been modified (notice the twofold heading), is authentic, and was written in the second century;[1] that its author was probably a simple-minded Jew-Christian; and that it was used for the instruction of catechumens and converts in "the way" of Christian life, with little reference to doctrinal beliefs. It thus acquires interest and value as one illustration of Christian feeling and *practice* in that early or sub-apostolic period when the faith had neither been elucidated nor adulterated by scholarship; when "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," had heeded the call of the gospel;

[1] "The supposition that it was written before the year 120 is doubtful; before the year 100, very improbable. The whole range between 120 and 165 must be held open for it; and within this period the earlier dates encounter fewer difficulties than the later." (Harnack's Die Apostellehre und die Jüdischen Beiden Wege. Leipzig, 1886, p. 24.)

when the new religion was still an enthusiasm of the uncultured and the poor; when diversities of belief were held with little challenge or breach of fellowship; when the life-blood of the Church had not ebbed away through the wounds made by dogmatic dissensions; when Christianity wore the aspect of a moral revolt against the sordidness, selfishness, and ruinous sensuality of ancient society; when the ethical impression made by the Sermon on the Mount and by the message of the Apostles was still fresh, so that the teachers and guides of the infant Church were chiefly urgent "that they who believed in God should be careful to maintain good works." Read in this light, and with discrimination, the "Teaching" is more and better than a literary curiosity; it lights, as with a little candle, an obscure period of church history; it still makes a powerful appeal to conscience, and it feeds aspiration.

This edition is based on a translation made by Rev. C. C. Starbuck, and printed in the "Andover Review" for April, 1884; which, with the translator's approval, has been carefully revised by a competent hand and brought into harmony with the revised edition of the Greek text, produced in *fac-simile* by Prof. J. Rendel Harris (1887). Where the Greek is identical with that of the New Testament, the rendering has been made to agree, the revision of 1881 being taken as the standard; and, as in our English Bible, supplementary words not contained in the original are printed in italics. In a few instances, alternate or explanatory renderings have been inserted, and are enclosed in brackets. The text of the original is not broken up into chapters, the present divisions having been introduced by the first editor, Bryennios.

For permission to use this material, the publishers return thanks to the translator, the reviser, and the editors of the "Andover Review."

TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

TEACHING OF THE LORD THROUGH THE TWELVE APOSTLES TO THE GENTILES.

Chapter I. There are two ways, one of life and one of death; and a great difference between the two ways. Now the way of life is this: first, thou shalt love the God that made thee; secondly, thy neighbor as thyself; and all things whatsoever thou wouldest should not happen to thee, do not thou to another. Now of these words the teaching is this: Bless them that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for them that persecute you. For what thank if ye love them that love you? Do not even the Gentiles the same? But love ye them that hate you and ye shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and bodily lusts. If any man give thee a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and thou shalt be perfect. If any man compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. If any man take away thy cloak, give him thy coat also. If any man take from thee thine own, ask it not again; for neither canst thou. Give to every one that asketh thee and ask it not again; for to all doth the Father will that there be given of *his* own free gifts. Blessed is he that giveth according to the commandment; for he is guiltless. Woe to him that receiveth; for if any man receiveth having need, he shall be guiltless; but he that hath not need shall give account, why he received and for what; and having come into custody, he shall be examined concerning what things he hath practised, and shall not come out thence until he have paid the last farthing. But concern-

ing this also hath it been said: Let thine alms sweat into thy hands, until thou know to whom thou shouldst give.

Chapter II. And a second commandment of the Teaching: Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not seduce boys; thou shalt not commit fornication; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not use magic; thou shalt not use sorcery; thou shalt not kill a child by abortion, nor what has been born shalt thou put to death. Thou shalt not covet the things that are thy neighbor's; thou shalt not forswear thyself; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not speak evil; thou shalt not bear a grudge. Thou shalt not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for a snare of death is the double tongue. Thy speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. Thou shalt not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor malicious, nor haughty. Thou shalt not take evil counsel against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not hate any man, but some shalt thou reprove, and for some shalt thou pray, and some shalt thou love above thy life.

Chapter III. My child, flee from every evil thing and from everything like it. Be not soon angry; for anger leadeth to murder: nor jealous, nor contentious, nor wrathful; for of all these things are murders engendered. My child, be not lustful; for lust leadeth to fornication: nor a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye; for of all these things are adulteries engendered. My child, be not an observer of omens; since it leadeth unto idolatry: nor an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, neither be thou willing to look at these things; for of all these things is idolatry engendered. My child, be not a liar; since a lie leadeth unto theft: nor a lover of money, nor vainglorious; for of all these things are thefts engendered. My child, be not a murmurer; since it leadeth unto blasphemy: nor self-

willed, nor evil-minded; for of all these things are blasphemies engendered. But be thou meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering, and merciful, and guileless, and quiet, and good; and continually trembling at the words which thou hast heard. Thou shalt not exalt thyself, nor shalt thou give to thy soul audacity. Thy soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with righteous and lowly ones shalt thou hold converse. The visitations that befall thee shalt thou receive as good, knowing that without God nothing cometh to pass.

Chapter IV. My child, of him that speaketh to thee the word of God shalt thou be mindful night and day; thou shalt honor him as the Lord; for whence the *divine* lordship is spoken, there is the Lord. And thou shalt daily seek out the faces of the saints, that thou mayest rest upon their words. Thou shalt not be desirous of division, but shalt set contenders at peace. Thou shalt judge righteously, thou shalt have no respect of persons in reproving for trespasses. Thou shalt not be double-minded [i. e. waver in soul] whether it shall be or not. Be not a stretcher forth of the hands in respect of receiving, but in respect of giving a contracter *of them;* if thou have, through thy hands shalt thou give redemption for thy sins. Thou shalt not hesitate to give, nor giving shalt thou murmur; for thou shalt know who is the good recompenser of the reward. Thou shalt not turn away from him that is in need, but shalt share all things with thy brother, and shalt not say that they are thine own; for if ye are sharers in the immortal thing, how much more in the mortal things. Thou shalt not take away thy hand from thy son or from thy daughter, but from *their* youth shalt teach *them* the fear of God. Thou shalt not command in thy bitterness thy servant or handmaid who hope in the same God, lest haply they shall not fear the God who is over both;

for he cometh not to call with respect of persons, but to them whom the Spirit hath prepared. But ye, the servants, shall be subject to your lords as to a type of God in modesty and fear. Thou shalt hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord. Thou shalt in no wise forsake the Lord's commandments, but thou shalt observe what things thou didst receive, neither adding nor taking away. In the congregation thou shalt confess thy trespasses, and thou shalt not draw near for thy prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

CHAPTER V. But the way of death is this: first of all it is evil and full of curse; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, extortions, false witnessings, hypocrisies, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, malice, self-will, covetousness, filthy talking, jealousy, audaciousness, loftiness, boasting: persecutors of good men, hating truth, loving falsehood, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not cleaving to good nor to righteous judgment, watching not unto good, but unto evil; far from whom are meekness and patience, loving vain things, pursuing a recompense, not pitying a poor man, not toiling for him that is bowed down with toil, not knowing him that made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the thing formed of God, turning away from him that is in need, oppressing him that is afflicted, rich men's advocates, poor men's lawless judges, utterly sinful. May ye be delivered, children, from all these.

CHAPTER VI. See that no one lead thee astray from this way of the Teaching; since, God excepted, it teacheth thee. For if indeed thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect: but if thou art not able, what thou art able that do. And concerning food, what

thou art able bear: but of that which is sacrificed to idols beware greatly; for it is a service of dead gods.

CHAPTER VII. Now concerning baptism, baptize ye thus: having said all these things beforehand, baptize ye into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm. But if thou have neither, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Ghost. And before the baptism let the baptizer fast and the baptized, and whatever others can: and thou shalt command the baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.

CHAPTER VIII. And let not your fastings be with the hypocrites: for they fast on the second of the week and the fifth; but do ye fast the fourth, and Preparation. Neither pray ye as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his gospel, so pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one* [*or* evil]. For thine is the power and the glory forever. Thrice in the day so pray ye.

CHAPTER IX. Now concerning the Thanksgiving [*or* Eucharist], give ye thanks thus: First concerning the cup: We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David thy servant, which thou madest known to us through Jesus thy servant; to thee *be* the glory forever. And concerning the broken *bread:* We give thanks to thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou

madest known to us through Jesus thy servant: to thee *be* the glory forever. As this broken *bread* was scattered abroad over the mountains, and being gathered together became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom: for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever. But let no one eat or drink of your Thanksgiving [*or* Eucharist], but those baptized into the name of the Lord: for concerning this also hath the Lord said: Give not that which is holy to the dogs.

CHAPTER X. And after being filled, give ye thanks thus: We give thanks to thee, Holy Father, for thy holy name which thou causedst to dwell [*lit.* tabernacle] in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou madest known to us through Jesus, thy servant: to thee *be* the glory forever. Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for thy name's sake; both food and drink didst thou give to men to enjoy, that they might give thanks to thee; but to us didst thou grant spiritual food and drink and life eternal through thy servant. Before all things we give thanks to thee that thou art mighty: to thee *be* the glory forever. Remember, Lord, thy church, to deliver it from every evil, and to make it perfect in thy love; and gather it together from the four winds, the sanctified *church*, into thy kingdom which thou didst prepare for it: for thine is the power and the glory forever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any one is holy, let him come: if any one is not, let him repent: Maranatha. Amen. But permit ye the prophets to give thanks as much as they will.

CHAPTER XI. Whosoever therefore shall come and teach all these things, the aforesaid, receive him: but if he

that teacheth shall himself turn and teach another teaching to destroy *this*, do not hear him; but if to increase righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. And concerning the Apostles and Prophets according to the ordinance of the gospel, do thus: Let every apostle coming unto you be received as the Lord; but he shall not remain one day, but if there be need the second also; but if he remain three, he is a false prophet. And let the apostle when he goeth forth take nothing save bread *to suffice* until he lodge; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet speaking in the Spirit ye shall not try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but *only* if he have the behavior [*or* ways (Lat. *mores*)] of the Lord. From his behavior therefore shall the false prophet be known and the prophet. And every prophet ordaining a table in the Spirit will not eat thereof; or else he is a false prophet: and every prophet teaching the truth, if what things he teacheth he doeth not, is a false prophet. And every prophet approved, true, acting in reference to the mystery of the Church here below [*or* in reference to a cosmic symbol of the church (cf. e. g. Eph. v. 32)], but not teaching to do what things he himself doeth, shall not be judged before you; for with God hath he his judgment: for in like manner did the old prophets also. But whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me money or aught else, ye shall not hear him; but if concerning others that are in want, he bid *you* to give, let no one judge him.

Chapter XII. And let every one that cometh in the name of the Lord be received, and then having proved him ye shall know *him;* for ye shall have understanding right and left. If he that cometh is a wayfarer, help him as

much as ye are able; but he shall not remain with you except two or three days, if need be. But if he willeth to dwell with you, being a craftsman, let him work and eat: but if he hath not a craft, provide according to your understanding, how he a Christian shall not live idle among you. And if he willeth not so to do, he is one that maketh merchandise of Christ: beware of such.

Chapter XIII. And every true prophet that willeth to dwell with you, is worthy of his food. In like manner a true teacher himself also is worthy, even as the workman, of his food. All first-fruits, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of both oxen and sheep, shalt thou take and give the first fruits to the prophets; for it is they that are your chief priests. But if ye have not a prophet, give to the poor. And if thou make a batch *of bread*, take the first-fruits and give according to the commandment. In like manner when thou openest a jar of wine or oil, take the first-fruits and give to the prophets; and of money also and raiment and every possession take the first-fruits, as it may seem good to thee, and give according to the commandment.

Chapter XIV. And every Lord's Day of the Lord gather yourselves together and break bread; and give thanks, having also confessed your trespasses, that our sacrifice may be pure. And let no one that hath a difference with his fellow come together with you until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled: for this is that spoken by the Lord, In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name marvellous among the Gentiles.

Chapter XV. Appoint therefore unto yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek and not

lovers of money and true and approved: for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Do not therefore contemn them; for themselves are your honored ones with the prophets and teachers.

And reprove ye one another; not in wrath but in peace, as ye have *it* in the gospel: and to every one erring against another let no one speak, neither let him hear *aught* from you until he repent. And your prayers and alms and all *your* acts so do as ye have *it* in the gospel of our Lord.

CHAPTER XVI. Watch for your life. Let your lamps not go out, and let your loins not be unloosed, but be ye ready; for ye know not the hour wherein our Lord cometh. And often shall ye be gathered together, seeking the things befitting your souls: for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you except ye be made perfect in the last time [*lit.* season]. For in the last days shall the false prophets be multiplied and the corrupters, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves and love shall be turned into hate: for when iniquity increaseth, they shall hate one another and persecute and deliver up. And then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God; and he shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands; and he shall do abominable things which never have come to pass since the world began. Then shall the creation of men come into the burning of proving, and many shall be caused to stumble and shall perish; but they that have endured in their faith shall be saved by the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of the expansion [i. e. the Crucifix] in heaven; then the sign of the voice of the trumpet; and the third the resurrection of the dead: yet not of all, but as was said, The Lord shall come and all the saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

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THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

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[No. 84]

WILL MANKIND OUTGROW RELIGION?

BY

CHARLES G. AMES, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

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The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

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(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

WILL MANKIND OUTGROW RELIGION?

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER."

THUS, through the ages, in humility or in exultation, has ascended the acknowledgment of human dependency and divine supremacy. Will mankind always say "Amen" to this sublime ascription? or will the chorus of worship and praise die into silence, because unsupported by the faith of the heart?

Through all the historic past, man has felt himself held fast to a Supreme Power by a sacred bond of reverence, dependence, mystery, trust, and duty. This bond has been called "religion" because it is the ligament, or tie, which is supposed to *bind back* the produced finite being to its Infinite Source, and thus to connect each with all, and all with each. The reflecting man, however weak, blind, and confused, not only tries to form some conception of himself, of the world, and of its Author, but he also feels himself under a kind of spell, as if his little life were beset, contained, and ruled by a larger Life. Even the code of morality, by which experience has taught him to regulate his outward and inward conduct, has seemed to him like the revelation and mandate of a Will above his own; and self-approval or self-disapproval has affected him like the whispering of a divine Voice. So it has been,

that, whether his religion made him crouch in terror amid the shadows or stand erect in light and freedom as a glad child of the Highest, it has ever carried within it a sense of *relationship to the Unseen*. Thus have all the faiths, worships, and liturgies of the ages been fashioned; as if every kindred, tongue, and nation were moved by a common impulse to cry, "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory!"

Will all this, or something like this, go on forever? Or will the supposed bond dissolve, and man find himself supreme master or helpless plaything of nature and destiny? Is religion a permanent fact, or is it only one transient phase of human experience, to be outgrown as the race rises into maturer reasonableness and self-possession? Some say we are already leaving religion behind. Certainly, in the more enlightened lands, there is wide-spread doubt and misgiving; the churches seem to depend timidly on tradition and custom, as if their vitality were drawn from the past rather than from faith in the real Presence; belief is everywhere on the defensive; multitudes feel no attraction toward any form of worship, and seem to live and die without the sense of God. May they not live and die just as well? Some voices tell us so.

Mr. Justice Stephen, of England, says, "The great difficulty in the way of all religions is that mankind do not like them and do not want them." He goes on to argue that if religion should be given up entirely, the world would be greatly changed in some respects, but we should get on very well without religion, because human life would be regulated and guided by rational and very safe principles, — such as enlightened self-interest and natural affection. Other serious persons are saying the same thing; perhaps many are thinking, or inclining to think, that progress moves in that direction.

Religion, they tell us philosophically, belongs to an early stage of evolution. The human race, in its long infancy of many thousands of years, has been half-asleep, and has had dreams, good and bad, — dreams of gods and devils, of heavens and hells. As the growing man-child awakes, shakes off his nightmare, and looks around, his religious notions will vanish like other phantoms of darkness and twilight; he will find himself "alone in nature," and will trust to his own faculties and to the service of the physical forces.

Peter Cooper once told me what in his youth he heard from an old man on a canal-boat: "In their ignorance and fear, men built altars. Religion became a trade. The priests ate roast beef, and the people stared." May we take this as a summary of religious history? An old Roman writer says, "All religions are alike sublime to the vulgar, useful to the politician, ridiculous to the philosopher." John Adams once said, in a pet, "This would be a pretty good world, if only there were no religion in it;" but, on cooler second thought, he doubted if it would be a good world. A timid citizen disturbed by the advance of Romanism, asked, "Is our next war to be a war of religion?" "No," was the assuring answer; "we have n't got any religion to fight for."

But not everybody can be indifferent or careless. To many it is a time of honest difficulty and trouble of spirit; they hardly know what to believe or how to guide their life; and they feel as if the foundations of faith, hope, and duty were giving way. Some say, "Let us not ask troublesome questions, but hold fast to the faith of our fathers. Let us say our prayers and go to sleep; that will be safest." Some strain their eyes to get a peep into the darkness; some shut their eyes for fear of seeing something, or for the sadder fear that there is nothing to

be seen; some whistle to keep their courage up: some mock; perhaps some are calm enough to look all facts in the face, and to wait patiently for more light.

There is wide dissatisfaction with the old way of putting things. In one city a prominent man said to me, "I go to the most fashionable and wealthy church. It is filled with our most intelligent people. We go through the motions and responses in regular order; but when we get out on the sidewalk, gentlemen say to each other, 'Do you believe that?' 'No, not a word of it; but 't is all well enough.'" In another city an official member of one of the largest churches gives it as his opinion that there is not one well-informed man in the congregation who does not sometimes ask if it can be possible the minister expects the people to believe what he preaches. Intimations of this kind come from all directions. Does it mean that religion is being outgrown? Or does it mean that what is *called* religion is under suspicion and challenge, because it does not altogether deserve the name?

It is not worth while to waste words on those who treat these matters with levity and scoffing; but I only report what I know, from wide intercourse, to be true of increasing numbers of thoughtful and earnest men and women. Justly or unjustly, their criticism on what is called religion runs on such lines as these:—

Most of the religious people, say they, seem not to be in earnest. If they are kind and just, it cannot be traced to their religion. Neither in conduct nor in motives do they exhibit superior virtue; and profession hangs loosely on them like a cloak. Insincerity is a leading product of church industry. The tendency is to develop an affectation of unreal sentiments and qualities, and to make people imagine themselves better than they are. Therefore religion is inconsistent with good morals.

Or if they are really in earnest, so much the worse; for their religion unfits them for common life. It puts non-natural qualities in the place of simple manliness and womanliness. It makes them uncomfortable, as if they wore straight-jackets. Their life becomes austere, sad, solitary, gloomy, morbid; it smells of the tomb. They groan when they pray; and when they come among their fellow-men their presence is felt as a wet blanket, and not as an inspiration of good cheer. Therefore, say these critics, religion is inconsistent with sanity and happiness.

Again, it is said, if religion means much to a man, it is apt to make him intolerant and proscriptive. He thinks that he and his kind have more rights than their neighbors. He crowds his opinions and his prayers on other people. He demands that we shall accept his doctrines and authorities on trust. He insists we shall hear and read what supports his views, and would gladly suppress the other side. He speaks and writes venomously, like a partisan. And acting in this narrow spirit, great combinations of religious men set up systems of priestly power and church domination to overawe and control the human mind, and to build high walls of bigotry and exclusiveness between those who ought to live together as brethren. Therefore religion is contrary to liberty and charity.

Look at history, they say further. See how religion has obstructed the upward path of humanity by decrying this world, by obscuring intelligence, by fostering dependence and credulity, by scaring mankind out of the use of their faculties, by disparaging science, by denouncing free inquiry, by keeping alive what ought to die, and by strangling new-born aspirations, or prohibiting every movement it could not control. In the name of progress, they cry, let us have done with it forever!

So, then, you object to religion because it is opposed to good morals, to welfare, to mental freedom, to good-will among men, and to the advance of the race. You believe, then, in the moral order, and in moral conditions of happiness. You believe that men are bound together by the tie of a common nature. You demand of these mistaken religious people a deeper sincerity, a purer principle of life. You blame them for accepting too low a standard of character. But in the very act of impeaching religion you seem to proclaim a law above self-will and blind impulse; you urge that men should be loyal to an ideal; your theory of life and of the universe implies faith in an upward movement toward perfection. Thus the grandest affirmation is folded in the heart of your denial.

Give us your hand; yours is a profession of religion! Your objections to what is *called* religion are really demands for a better article, — the very thing we want. You have simply exposed and branded the counterfeit, — a service for which all friends of the genuine should thank you. And will you not be thankful in return, if it grows clear that the faults and deficiencies of religious people, — their errors of belief, their blundering methods, their perversities of temper, and their shocking crimes against civilization and humanity, — are no part of true religion, but are fairly chargeable to their want of it? Cant, rant, superstition, bigotry, obscurantism, false conservatism, hypocrisy, empty formalism, priestcraft, — what has true religion to do with these but to expel them from the heart of man, and to drive them off the face of the earth? And can the objector claim exemption from the frailties of judgment or the base principles and passions which have produced these errors and evils? Will he escape from the false by holding aloof from the true? Are not the

follies of religious men and institutions a part of the general imperfection of the race? How shall any of us win deliverance from the bondage of the lower law, except by rising into the freedom of the higher?

But the worst enemies of religion are not those who turn away in disgust from its perversions. "Not they are profane who reject the gods of the vulgar, but they who accept them," says Lucretius. Yet it may be partly a question of words. If men stop their ears to shut out harsh and jarring sounds, it will not do to conclude that they hate music. They may love it all too well to listen. And if I hold up some theological daub, and tell them it is a portrait of Deity, will it be strange if some take me at my word, and cry out, "Then we are atheists"? Yet when did men ever deny or doubt the reality of the universe, merely because science gave absurd or inadequate explanations?

Sweep away all that is irrational in creeds or obstructive in churches; make an end of wolfish and sheepish types of piety and canting forms of philanthropy; lead mankind onward and upward into the full, clear light of reason and the large freedom of nature, — and will religion have disappeared? Only as the sun disappears when men come out of caverns and cellars, and find the mists of morning swept from the wide firmament of blue and gold.

Outgrow religion? Plainly enough that depends on what you mean by religion. If you mean some particular way of thinking about God and man and their relations, these are great subjects, about which we have much to learn; and —

"The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

No doctrinal statement is likely to be a finality. If you mean some particular fashion of feeling, it is not likely that the pious experiences of one age will ever be repeated in another. If you mean the structure and customs of some particular church, it seems to be in the order of things that institutions should come and go like the leaves of the forest. If by religion you mean blindness, it is to be hoped that men will get their eyes open. If you mean amiable weakness or cowardly and servile submission to masters, there will be less and less of these as we grow in mental and moral vigor, and all strong souls will break their chains. So far as our life is obscured by the ugly shadows of superstition, these will vanish with the advance of daylight. And if by religion you mean false alarm, a reign of terror which sees an Almighty Tyrant at the head of the government, we are already learning to laugh at the prayers which were only the outcry of our childish fears.

But what if religion means the inward impulse and the upward movement of humanity toward its own perfection? What if it means all wholeness, wholesomeness, and sweet completeness of our being? What if it means open eyes, pure reasonableness, true wisdom, the finest form of mental power, the most exalted freedom of the spirit, the rectitude of the will, and inmost purity of heart? Is not this according to nature? Is it not the harmony and health to which we forever aspire? If religion means the honest endeavor to reach a complete life by the diligent use of all helps, — if it is the passion, the principle, and the power that make for righteousness in the individual and in society, — then, if the men of the future are to be an improvement on the men of to-day, they will not outgrow religion, but will grow more fully into it. They will

grow away from the errors which have obscured it, away from the perversions which have disfigured it, away from the stupidities which have been mistaken for it, away from the corruptions which have dishonored it; but they will grow ever more toward its holy realities, its heavenly excellencies, its precious fellowships.

We are not obliged to choose between a false religion and no religion at all; our choice is rather between the false and the true, or between the lower and the higher, — a difference even greater than that between the candle burning at an altar and the sun shining in the high heaven. If there be indeed a Wise Spirit, working in us and presiding over the Church and the world, we shall surely outgrow much that passes for religion, and much that is now covered all over with Christian labels; but this advance will be along the line of spiritual evolution toward the goal at which Jesus himself points when he bids us "be perfect, like the Father." We are to leave behind the religion of unreality, of sickly sentiment, of self-seeking piety, which suffocates both love of God and love of man; we are to leave behind the religion which builds on disbelief in human nature, which encourages self-mutilation, and darkens the daylight; for every true advance is a result of human forces obediently working with the divine, and we *must* trust and use our faculties for their proper purposes. When man loses respect for his own constitution, his very faith in God is threatened with insanity.

Through all the changes of belief, *something* is constant. What did the Greeks mean by the fable of Proteus, a deity of the sea, perpetually assuming new forms, — now a dolphin, now a quadruped, now a bird, now a wave? The lance could pierce the fish, the club could slay the beast, the net could snare the bird, the wave subsided and

was lost in the sea; but the god escaped unharmed, forever fresh and young. In every form, though it were of a fly or a reptile, the god really dwelt for the time. Is it not the same with human faith in the Supreme Power? Even in low, creeping superstitions there is a vague stirring of truth and life. Our insect faculties grasp some reality, but ripening reason soon dismisses the form of thought as inadequate, only to see another take its place. Theology undergoes many transformations: science wields its facts to strike down the old theory of creation; criticism pierces our traditions and articles of faith with sharp, fatal shafts of logic; the highway of history is strewn with the wrecks and ruins of dead faiths and worships, — yet the mysterious Presence perpetually appears in human thought. Destroy all the so-called religions, but religion itself refuses to die. Out of doubt itself arises a purified faith; the unbelievers can have no peace till they strike hands in new fellowships, and lay the foundations of new temples. No harm ever comes to the man who lets go a creed which he can no longer retain with honesty; much harm may come from heartless conformity and insincere profession. "Let us not fear that we can lose anything in the progress of the soul."

But not all change is progress; there is evolution downward as well as upward; and men may let go the truth as well as renounce error. Is it clear that all the men who tell us in the name of liberty, nature, and reason that they have left religion behind, are really moving toward clearer light and higher life? An old story may serve as a parable. The ship's captain left a seaman in charge of the helm, telling him to steer toward a particular star. While the seaman took a nap, the ship went clean about, and when he opened his eyes, and searched the sky, he

saw that the star which had been ahead was now astern. Rushing to the captain, he exclaimed, "Give me another star to steer by; we 've sailed past that one!" Humanity makes real advances; and there are revolutions, as well as evolutions, which set us forward in the ways of freedom, truth, and virtue; but it is also true that men's heads run round while the stars hold their courses. Even by moving the wrong way, we shall not leave religion behind; we shall only fall back into some of its lower forms, — we shall worship we know not what.

Religion is to be permanent because of the permanent facts and factors of man's nature, and because of the unchanging relations between himself and the universe. His constitution is not self-imposed; he can impair, but he cannot amend it. He must always be a subject of law, since he can never be a legislator. The greatness of our needs, and the limits of our wisdom and power, must leave us forever dependent. The more we know, the more we shall wonder; the less we know the more must we take on trust. Always the unseen will be more than the seen; always the unknown will encompass and interfuse the known; always we must walk by faith more than by sight. The higher we aspire and reach, the further will the ideal recede; the purer and truer we become, the more commanding will be our sense of right, and the more sweet and strong will be the attractions of the true, the beautiful, and the good. As every advance in virtue must draw us into closer union with nature and humanity, so must it make us more deeply aware of the One Law, Life, and Love which generates, nourishes, and enfolds us all, and makes it certain that "all minds are of one family," with one origin and one destiny. Piety itself will seem natural to man, when the fervors and fevers of excited

feeling cool to the steady temperature of health, and when our fluttering, palpitating hearts settle to the rhythmic beat of orderly and rational life.

Outgrow religion? No; faith will become stronger as it is enlightened and reinforced by knowledge, or as we learn more of the wise, safe, friendly Order in which disorder is held as the ocean holds its eddies and ruffles; for that Order will shine around and within us like a revelation. Hope will feed itself on every hint of higher possibilities and vaster resources; love, casting out fear, resting and rejoicing in creation as the Father's house and ours, will yet gird itself to braver tasks, as it grows clear that the processes which outsight calls evolution, but which insight interprets as the ways of the Living God, are but the out-givings of Infinite Benignity, which forever incarnates and sacrifices itself to produce, train, and sustain a world of free, pure, and happy spirits.

Outgrow religion? What is to give tone and cheer and richness and depth to the life of mankind through the coming years and ages? We cannot live by bread alone; can we live alone by intellect? That freezes; an Arctic climate returns; life may glitter, but it will be an iceberg. But will not man's heart keep him warm? for he is a being of sentiment as well as of thought; he will still rejoice in natural affections; nature will feed his sense of beauty; society will feed his craving for fellowship. But if he is to see in nature the display of order and law, and if he is to see in humanity something more than a menagerie, — if he is to recognize merit, moral quality, and ideal excellence, — lo and behold, the door is wide open for the return of faith and worship. If we *could* subside into materialism, how long would pure love kindle its fires, or poetry spread her wings? After we have renounced the

life of the soul, what will remain but a life of the senses? "If we look only downward, our path leads over graves," says Bunsen; "if we look upward, it leads under stars." Over graves it must indeed lead; but if not also under stars, then were man's life —

> "A life of nothings, nothing worth,
> From that first nothing ere his birth
> To that last nothing under earth."

With no sense of deep meaning in existence, no large outlook, no urgent and commanding interest in living, we shall have but a dull prospect before and around us, — a landscape of sand without a sky. And how can the man who thus rates his own being low set a high value on his fellows? Our regard for humanity, our public spirit, and our private friendships, — think how these must decline as we lose faith in the divine possibilities of man and in the assured care of Providence! What shall chain and tame our lower passions after we have really accepted the theory that we are only a superior kind of beasts? Do you answer, Conscience, the inward law of reason, the sense of right and wrong? Ah, yes, then you begin again to provide for religion; for this homage to the moral nature of man, this allegiance to a law above man's will, is the rock on which is built the temple of his faith and hope, his love and worship.

Allow that in man's nature there is permanently active a principle or a power which impels him toward goodness; which reproves his evils, and enforces his discoveries of duty; which leads him toward truth, and braces his will for self-denying virtue, so that it is made possible for him to grow wiser and better every day, and thus to ascend toward perfection, — would there be any objection to his

saying, This is the best thing about me, and it must be my ruler? But in saying this he really vows himself to the religious life.

Always this mighty inward Power holds our being in poise, as the planets are held in their paths through empty space; always, like those shining worlds, we are impelled onward in a course we do not trace by any wisdom of our own; always we live and move, and have our being in the heart of boundless mystery; always in our highest moods we crave to feel that —

> "God's greatness
> Flows around our incompleteness;
> Round our restlessness, His rest."

The doubts and difficulties amid which so many are struggling in our days would be greatly diminished, perhaps they would generally vanish, if we who profess to be spiritual guides of the people could only learn and teach religion in harmony with human nature, human need, and experience. But this will require us to distinguish more carefully between religion and the theories, methods, literatures, customs, and institutions which are its products, — all once its helpers, often now its hindrances, and sometimes curiously mistaken for itself.

It is high time to say frankly, The Bible is not religion; the Church is not religion; neither is any ceremony or sacrament or doctrinal belief. Let these be valued according to their reasonable uses. Let them stand or fall on their merits, as disclosed by experience and by free and fair inquiry. About all these matters there are many open questions, and there will be honest differences. But whatever may be our conclusions or our non-conclusions of such questions, the foundations of faith and of reason need not be disturbed. *Religion is life;* and life, which is

the true seat of God's kingdom, is within. O friend, it is within *you.*

We must cease to disparage and darken the light that lighteth every man. We must appeal with more confidence to the native instincts of the soul. We must recognize and honor the divine in the human.

The advancing race will surely have a religion; but it will not be built of dream-stuff; for man will be mastered by reality. It will not be something external, something which he "gets," and puts on; it will be *life itself,* his own life, — the health and completeness of his being, the rational action of his faculties, and wise ordering of his conduct and relations. What more can we need? What less will meet our need? But is not this the essence and outcome of Christianity, if we go to the heart of it?

"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." We want a religion for common uses, and for home consumption. Pure air and wholesome food will yet be sacramental; cleanliness will be baptismal; an honest day's work will be an acceptable sacrifice; our breath will be prayer, and our play will be innocent; our very flesh will be sweet, healed of the old disorders of the ages. Then churches will be as households, and households as churches; there will be seven holy days in every week. "This is the covenant that I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord: I will put my law in their minds, and write it in their hearts; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Good-by, then, to confusing and misleading echoes of the Voice which forever speaks! Good-by to the worn-out costumes of dead generations! Good-by to tiresome routine and cumbrous ceremonial! Let us tenderly lay aside the dear old copy-books wherein we have scrawled

and mis-spelled the holy words of faith and salvation. All honor to the monuments and mile-stones which mark the majestic march of God in history; but our faces are to the future. We do not desert the heavenly Leader; we move at His orders, toward new and grander victories.

Poor, rich human heart! say good-by also to folly and sin; to irreverent self-will and silly conceit; to worldliness, animalism, and torpid indifference; to unbrotherly greed and ill-will; to profane uses of the day and night. Learn the truth as it is in Jesus: "that ye put off the old man with his deeds, which are corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that ye put on the new man, fashioned on the divine pattern, in righteousness and true holiness." Go forth to the life of faith, which is the life of faithfulness, and to the service of man, which is the true service of God.

O Spirit Eternal, for thy gift of life we forsake all else!

VIEWS OF RELIGION

By Theodore Parker

Size, 6 x 8 1-2; pages, 466; price, $1.00 *net;* postage, 19 cents.

"A LIVING book, which will stimulate thought, kindle aspiration, quicken languid powers of devotion, and strengthen men in their belief in God, in their love of humanity, and in their hope of eternal life." The selections have been confined to Parker's religious affirmations, in which the warmth of heart and the devoutness of spirit of the man are best revealed. The charm of his vivid and imaginative style clothes the richness of his suggestive and penetrating thought with added beauty, beneath all of which are seen and felt the preacher's passion for humanity and its needs, and the longing to make the power of God a living force in human lives. Here are revealed the inner spiritual nature of the man, his loyalty to truth, his kindly and affectionate disposition, his devotion to his fellow-men.

WEST ROXBURY SERMONS

By Theodore Parker

Size, 5 1-4 x 7; pages, 258; price, 75 cents *net;* postage, 9 cents.

A VOLUME made up from unpublished manuscripts of sermons delivered in West Roxbury, Mass., from 1837 to 1848. This is the period in Parker's life which has not been covered in his other publications, and which was therefore known only by those in personal relations with him in his parish. This book possesses value, therefore, not only in dealing with themes of perennial interest which have a direct relation to life and character, but also in throwing light upon Parker's mental and religious development, as indicated in his early sermons. Discourses on doctrinal subjects are omitted, since these were wrought out with greater power in subsequent years. Here "he does not appear so much as the reformer or controversialist, but as the preacher in a suburban parish, breaking the bread of life to his congregation from week to week." Samuel J. Barrows has an admirable introduction, and F. B. Sanborn has contributed a brief biographical sketch.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 Beacon Street, Boston

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

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FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 85]

THE BIBLE IN THEOLOGY.

BY

REV. WILLIAM W. FENN.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

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THE BIBLE IN THEOLOGY.

FIVE years ago I heard Dr. McKenzie, of Cambridge, say that the next great debate in the Christian Church would be upon the nature and measure of Biblical authority. Upon as slender a foundation as even this passing remark rests the fame of many an old-time seer, for to-day the prophecy is manifestly fulfilled, not in a corner, but "before all Israel and the sun," and within the quick memory of those who heard the prediction. The little cloud then descried upon the horizon, — which, by the way, had long been hanging there, — having suddenly gathered into itself all scudding flecks of controversy, now darkens almost the entire blue of theology, and threatens by obscuring the sun to chill religious ardor and starve the fruits of the spirit. Religious disputes are always as regrettable as they are sometimes unavoidable. The army of the Lord cannot even yet altogether dispense with polemics; but future gains will more than make good immediate losses. Crops always suffer when ploughshares are beaten into swords and pruning-hooks into spears, but Joels may still remind us that the triumph of an eternal principle is more than the garnering of a season's harvest; and obviously, no principle is more vital to institutional Christianity on the one side and to spiritual Christianity on the other than that now mooted, for all the differences among sects are finally traceable either to the greater or less weight given the testimony of Scripture or to disagreement as to what

that testimony actually is. If all Protestants were to agree that the Bible carries no unique sanction, but is to be tested as regards the accuracy of its statements and the truth of its ethical and religious teachings by exactly the same canons which are unhesitatingly applied to the Vedas and the Koran, a multitude of petty disputes would close as quickly as legal battles about the meaning of a testament when another will is discovered of proved genuineness and a later date. Darwin's book on the "Origin of Species" put an end to innumerable and apparently interminable scientific quarrels about classification. It matters comparatively little how subjects interpret a royal proclamation so long as they are ready to do the sovereign's will when known; but it 's a bad day for the monarch, and ominous of revolution, when men fall to asking what right he has to be king and issue decrees at all. When Thoreau once heard an auditor ask, "Why does he lecture at all?" he says, "It made me quake in my shoes."

Thus the importance of the question alone might almost justify the bitterness which its discussion engenders, but there is yet a finer palliation. Men have "become Christians" seldom or never because after critically canvassing the evidences, they have come to the conclusion that, on the whole, the credentials of this religion are rather better than those of any other, and hence that it is more worthy of credence, but almost invariably because some simple or heroic Christian life or some heart-stirring Christian word has penetrated their lethargy and compelled their allegiance. We may select our servants critically, but our masters come to us with the words of Jesus on their lips, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" and we do them instinctive homage. When Arnold came tearing upon the field to complete the victory of Saratoga by rallying the American troops for an attack upon Burgoyne's line manœuvering for position, no soldier

raised the question whether, in view of his quarrel with Gates, he had any right to issue orders. There was no mention of credentials or commission; enough that he was leading the way that all would go, straight against the enemy, and so they followed, although not a man who then charged with him to victory but would afterward have upheld his title to command, since it is natural to contend earnestly for that to which we have committed ourselves. His right to lead for them was based upon the fact that he was actually leading in the right way. So it would be strange if those (and there are many such) whose moral defeat has been turned into spiritual victory by the inspiration of some thrilling Bible call, or whose despair and grief have been lightened by some tender Bible promise, were not hot against those whom they deem, though mistakenly, gainsayers of the book which has done so much for them. When a belief lies very near a man's heart, is structural in his personality, it is impossible that calling it in question should not evoke personal feeling. If you do not care whether I think as you do or not, it must be either that your thought is not precious and helpful to you or else that you have not sufficient concern for my welfare to care whether I am helped or not.

When, therefore, one who has found the Bible so potent in his own experience, and who, moreover, is intensely desirous that his brothers shall have all possible encouragement and sustenance in spiritual living, finds that his former opinions regarding the book are no longer tenable, it is only natural that he should be cautious and hesitant, reluctant for his own part to abate one whit of his old-time reverence, and fearful lest by misunderstood speech he may turn others from what he knows to be a source of abundant strength. If therefore we grow impatient with the alleged radicals for a

timid reserve verging perilously toward untruthfulness and insincerity, or are disgusted at the acrimony with which those who suppose themselves conservatives egg their opponents and egg on their champions, whose vociferousness is usually commensurate with their ignorance, it is well to bear in mind, by way of mitigation, that while there may be a tincture of unworthy sentiments, the basic feeling in either case is an eager care for the spiritual life, which must always command respect. Nevertheless, while the importance of the Bible in the thought of Christendom and in the lives of individual Christians may well excuse zeal without knowledge on the one side and knowledge without zeal on the other, nothing but the truth can be of permanent aid in the religious life; and the truth or falsehood of current views regarding the Bible is to be determined solely by an appeal to facts and a scholarly weighing of evidence. The Holy Spirit alone does not qualify a man to pronounce upon the age of a geological formation or of an Old Testament book, the authorship of the letters of Junius or of the Fourth Gospel, although without the Holy Spirit manifesting itself in supreme devotion to the truth alone, no inquiry whatsoever can be successfully prosecuted. Mr. Moody is a good and holy man; "so are they all, all honorable men," who addressed his meetings in Northfield last summer; but hardly one of those who spoke so harshly and dogmatically had any more right to pass judgment upon the methods and results of the Higher Criticism than you and I have to ridicule the canal-builders in Mars, if such there be or were. As Dr. Parkhurst said recently, "If the Pentateuch speaks of the coney that chews the cud, and science denies that the coney is a ruminant, the true method is not to denounce those who call attention to the discrepancy as subverters of the Bible, but to pro-

duce a cud-chewing coney." It must be repeated often and firmly that the place of the Bible in theology is to be settled, not by sentiment and the supposed necessities of faith, nor yet by our hankerings after an infallible authority and vague guesses as to where we shall be without it, but solely by strict investigation into the needs of theology and the contents of the Bible.

The toughest problem with which any one can close, and with which, in one form or another, nearly every man tries a fall sooner or later, concerns the relation between our ideas and external realities, between the thing as it appears to us and the thing as it is in itself. Having concluded that our ideas of material objects must be adequately representative, since otherwise we should have been worsted in the great struggle where everything depends upon accurate perceptions, we ask next after our aspirations and ideals. Has Nature, like a cunning sharper, let us win these lighter games only to trick us when our highest interests are at stake? Are our ideals merely ours, — our fairest yet most evanescent possessions having no correspondents in the world without, — or are they valid and trustworthy because prophetic products of Nature, who is revealing now in brain-matter what she will some time make manifest in all matter? If we take not the blind alley of materialism, but the high-road of religion, opening unhorizoned vistas, and affirm that as there is in ourselves a system of ideals which we call the soul, so there is also in the universe a system of ideals of which ours is a product and competent transcript, which we call the soul of the world, or God, it devolves upon theology to bring our ideals into more perfect conformity with the universe ideals, and also to show in each fact and event the presence and working of the divine Unity. Religion, which is a firm belief in the spiritual nature of the uni-

verse, may exist with a very imperfect theology, perhaps even with no theology at all; but it grows in purity and power only as the craving for unity, which is the soul's thirst for God apparent in thought, makes theology necessary and leads it in the way of perfection. As a science, theology must make the facts with which it deals transparent to thought. As a science of religion, and therefore having to do with all facts, it must make the whole world transparent to ideals. As a progressive science of religion, it develops as our ideals become truer and our knowledge larger and more precise. The demand for unity finds its fulfilment only in a perfect intellectual system of the universe, revealing a perfect system of ideals; that is, in a perfect theology.

Although it would be admitted almost universally that we have not yet a perfect theology, the vast majority of Christians believe that the thought of the Hebrew people received such especial divine illumination as to constitute it a revelation, and its transmission such especial divine oversight that in the Christian inheritance we have the materials for a perfect theology. Disregarding for the moment, as not germane to the present discussion, the claims of the historic churches to be the bearers and developers of the assumed revelation, let us consider the fundamental tenet of Protestantism, — that the Bible is the sole authoritative source of theology. There is undoubtedly a Biblical theology, precisely as there is a theology of the Greek poets; but the claim of Protestantism has been that Biblical theology is identical with theology absolute. Although it could never be affirmed that a compact system of theology is to be found in the Bible, — since it is manifestly a forest and not a lumber yard, still less a finished temple, — yet the time was when it was believed to contain all the facts necessary for a perfect intellectua

system of the universe, and all the ideals necessary for a perfect system of ideals, so that the theologian was only a systematizer and framer of the facts and principles of the Bible. Dr. Hodge, for instance, defines theology as the science that has to do with the facts and principles of the Bible. After repeating once to a very pious woman a statement in a sermon which struck my boyish fancy, to the effect that the pagan, or heathen, was literally one who dwelt in the country, and did not readily hear the Christian doctrine first proclaimed in great cities, I remember well the stern tone in which she asked me, "Did he find that in his Bible?" And it was only a decade ago that a young man intending to enter the Christian ministry declared to me his intention of studying only the Greek and Hebrew languages, that he might perfectly understand the Bible, which contained all that was necessary for a Christian preacher or theologian. Yet such views of the Bible, common enough once, are fast weathering away, not merely by the action of Biblical criticism, scientific study, and comparative religion, but mainly by the growing sense of unity which re-enforces each and is re-enforced in turn. When the feeling for unity questioned the idea that all the truth of God had been intrusted to a single nation arbitrarily selected, and that its thought upon all subjects, preserved for us in its literature had been kept free from error of every sort, Biblical criticism arose to show that the Bible was not infallible, and that the thought of Israel had developed in accordance with universal laws; and comparative religion made it evident that other nations besides Israel had been divinely taught. When science had vindicated beyond cavil the competence of the human mind to discern the truth in Nature, the demand for unity, reaffirming the doctrine of the one God, declared for the trust-

worthiness of reason in religion as well as in Nature, and — denying the possibility of permanent contradiction between the two revelations, in Nature and in the Bible — gave the book of Nature the decisive voice, as bearing better guarantees than the alleged book of immediate revelation.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the craving for unity has been constantly enlarging the needs of theology, and as steadily modifying traditional conceptions of revelation in general, and the contents of the Bible in particular, it is not strange that as Unitarians — laying, as has been brightly and truthfully said, more stress upon the Unit than upon the Arians — we have been foremost in receiving and presenting the real new theology, which, finding nowhere as yet a perfect system either of facts or of ideals, recognizes no single source or infallible authority for theology, but resting solely upon the perfecting human spirit as it grows into the divine likeness, pushes hopefully and trustfully on toward the perfect thought of God. Our attitude is precisely described by the much misused yet highly honorable name of "Liberals," which has been called upon us; for the Liberal in theology is he who admits no bonds or limitations to thought save those which inhere in the constitution of the mind itself. No matter what a man's opinions may be, if he stops short of conclusions at the behest of any external authority, or if in defending them he makes final appeal, not to his innermost sense of duty and rationality, — which he assumes to be concordant with that of others when untampered with, as his physical senses are with theirs, — but to some outlying declaration or rule, he is not a Liberal. For one Protestant who contends that in the building of the Lord's house no lumber may be used unless it grew in Palestine, and that every scrap of that growth is too sacred

not to be worked up somehow into the holy edifice, there are thousands who allow that wood may be brought from Philistia or elsewhere, and that even the trees of Israel may be trimmed and hewn a little without harm, but who urge, nevertheless, that every stick of the Biblical growth must be utilized, because it bears a heavenly stamp and hence may be relied upon not to give, warp, or decay; but the "Liberal," while recognizing the intrinsic superiority of the timber in this particular grove, gives it no immunity from closest scrutiny, rejects whatever seems to him unsound, and levies his contributions upon the forests of the world. The Bible does not supply all the materials for a perfect system of theology, since its facts are insufficient and frequently inaccurate, and its ideals are not always sound. Neither is it an infallible or even a final authority in theology, since the denial of what Professor Thayer calls "the pestilent theory that the Bible is absolutely free from error of every sort" — a theory which still obtains only among the uninformed — carries with it the implication that the Bible stands upon precisely the same footing as other books, and is subject to the same tests of trustworthiness and value. Of what use, then, is the Bible in theology, if it is not a perfect source or a final authority?

To say that the Bible is on the same footing as other books by no means implies that they are its equals. All men are on the same footing, for all tread the same earth; but there are giants and dwarfs, Emersons and "dagos." All stars bespangle the same sky, but "one star differeth from another star in glory." The Hebrews were master sons of the Spirit, and their testimony is that of experts in religion. Hence one chief use of the Bible in theology is to afford us the corroboration of the Spirit. My own opinion gains

wonderfully, quotes Carlyle frequently, "when I hear it from another's lips,"—the more if that other is an acknowledged leader in the science whereof he speaks. Hence it is that, with no lingering superstition or timid subservience, our tone gets firmer and more confident when our thoughts answer to the thoughts of the Hebrew prophets, particularly of Jesus, their unmistakable chief; and our fitful glimpses of truth are found to coincide with their steady vision. Moreover, the testimony of experts always has a presumption in its favor which does not attach to ordinary sources of information. When Professor Ezra Abbot, the Coryphæus of New Testament students in this country, made a statement concerning a manuscript or a reading, it was received with much greater deference than if emanating from some unknown writer in a religious journal, though it was by no means regarded as infallible or beyond revision. To say that we must approach the Bible precisely as we approach all other books is to say that we must come to a painting of Rembrandt and to the work of an unknown artist with the same mental posture. From what we know of the nature and history of the Bible, we are prepared to find its thought high and spiritual, ready to "consider it again" and think a little harder and longer over what at first seem to us blemishes and defects, yet never relinquishing our prerogatives of cross-questioning, of weighing, and, if need be, of positive and final disagreement. No word of Scripture is to be received without question, neither is any to be rejected without reason. To those holding the extreme Orthodox position, the Bible is a theological constitution which may never be amended, with which all opinions must square, and to which all judgments must conform. To the "Liberal Orthodox" it is a volume of leading cases which embrace all legal principles and all of

whose recorded rulings are final; but to us it is simply a volume of reports chronicling the decisions of eminent judges, whose opinions may be set aside by riper consideration, though they are presumably sound, and at any rate are not to be lightly rejected.

This idea of the corroboration of the Spirit gives what little color there is to the pretensions of the historic churches to be the seat of authority in religion. For, if we believe that the Semitic peoples, particularly the Hebrews, were the peculiar bearers of religion, as the Romans were of law, and if we use the word "Church" in its most comprehensive and least formal sense, as identical with that religious consciousness which is in the line of historic succession from Moses, Isaiah, and Jesus, we can hardly doubt that in the Church, as its most likely sphere, a perfect theology will slowly be evolved. Not that a doctrine once formally considered and approved by a formal conclave of the formal Church is therefore authoritatively settled for all time; evolution does not proceed thus mechanically and fragmentarily. The perfection of an organism is not attained by perfecting one by one its various members; the parts find and keep their perfection in the perfecting whole. The sun does not come up by piecemeal, here a bit and there a bit, with long intervals of time between the successive appearances, but as a whole; and the streaks of light are not the sun or portions of it, but only the hinting foregleams. When, however, we find that an idea is the lineal descendant, or ascendant, from a thought that was formative in the Hebrew consciousness and in Church history, we may rely with considerable confidence upon the authority of the Church, the "*testimonium sancti spiritus*," as evidence, not that we have attained to ultimate truth, but that we are in the right road, — that we are in the ways of the Spirit.

Besides the corroboration of the spirit, the Bible is of use, in theology, as a source of facts and principles. Obviously, the laws of religious development must be of immense importance in the study of theology, but these laws can be found only in the facts of religious growth; and where can we more hopefully look for the necessary facts than in the records of a nation whose history more than that of any other nation of the world is the history of a religious evolution? Much has been made of the uncertainty hanging over the facts of the Bible, particularly of the life of Jesus; but the uncertainty arises in good measure from the unwillingness to subject records which are held so sacred to the strict application of ordinary critical processes. There has doubtless been perversion and distortion of the facts; but, knowing the medium through which they have come, it is not so very difficult for us to compute the angle of refraction and plot the course of the ray before it entered the prism of superstition and vulgar prejudice. However much of myth and legend may have gathered about the primitive germ, the magnet will not attract wood, and the character of the accretion reveals the quality of the core. Moreover, what must be rejected as historic fact is often of paramount importance as evidence of a national sentiment. "Remember," said Ruskin, "that a lovely legend is all the more precious when it has no foundation. Cincinnatus might actually have been found ploughing beside the Tiber fifty times over, and it might have signified little to any one, least of all to you and me. But if Cincinnatus never was so found, nor ever existed at all in flesh or blood, but the great Roman nation, in its strength of conviction that manual labor in tilling the ground was good and honorable, invented a quite bodiless Cincinnatus and set him according to its fancy in furrows of the field, and put its own words into his mouth, and gave the honor of

its ancient deeds into his ghostly hand, — this fable which has no foundation, this precious coinage of the brain and conscience of a mighty people, you and I — believe me — had better read and know and take to heart diligently." Hence, although it is incredible that the Commandments were graven on stone by the finger of the Lord, it does not at all follow that they are only "ten crotchets of Moses," but rather that they embody the deepest and most ethical thought of the people. If many of the Old Testament and New Testament stories are not true to fact, they are true to principles which governed both in conduct and in literature. More important than the historical accuracy or inaccuracy of these stories is the fact that they were actually held to be true by a nation born for religion, and are the vehicle of its ideals, which, whether conveyed in narrative or didactic form, are almost always lofty and fit for theology.

Besides the two uses of the Bible in theology already mentioned, the corroboration of the spirit and the communication of facts and principles, it has yet a third: it creates the right climate for theology. Behind all the particular ideals of the Hebrews lay this great formative principle: God is holy, and will have his people holy. Because of this, their thought is marked by realism. "The Hebrew people," says Professor Briggs, "were as realistic as the Greeks were idealistic." In all their uplifts of heart and brain, their feet are fast on mother earth. They are not blind to solid facts; but they see them as solid, in their cubicalness with God as the third dimension. Because of this, too, their religious thought is ethical. It is easy to point out isolated instances of false ethical feeling, notably in the book of Esther, and of undue stress upon ceremonialism, as in the Levitical legislation; but is it not true that in the Hebrew literature, as a whole, we find religion sanctified by right ethical feeling and ethics

ablaze with religious fervor? Moreover, the God of Israel always stood for the best ethical thought of the people. Never among them, as so frequently elsewhere, was the God of popular theology baser than the man of popular approval. And, because this creative idea so permeates the Bible, the more fully we are imbued with its spirit, the less likely we shall be to vaporize and temporize in religious thinking, and the more emphasis we shall lay upon morality in religion and ethics in theology. Thus the climate of the book is favorable for the growth of pure ideals and for the maturing of a true theology. The book brings us into the same spirit whereof Isaiah and Jesus and Paul were partakers, and lifts us far above sordid materialism and belittling selfishness. Only in this zone can theology thrive. A man with no sense of beauty may construct a system of æsthetics, one who never laughed may produce a philosophy of the comic, but one who has never been thrilled by an ideal, who in hours of gloom has never heard —

> "the sound of silver wings
> Slow beating through the hush of night,"

and who in moments of trial has never seen —

> "how life's rugged mountain side
> Is white with many an angel tent,"

has no power to bring theology to birth. What makes religion possible and theology necessary but the fact that our ideals come to us clothed with more than mortal majesty and born unmistakably "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"? And as no science of beauty is satisfactory which does not make those who master it more keenly alive to beauty, and no ethical system can be valid which does not strengthen the moral sense, so no system of theology can

be true which does not grow best in the climate of ideals and further their growth. A body of divinity without an inspiring soul is worthless, and will become an offence. Hence any book which feeds and freshens the religious life is of immense value to the student of theology. Beyond the corroboration of the spirit and the communication of facts and principles is this service to theology of the Bible as a book of the Spirit.

I am aware that to many outside of our fellowship, perhaps to some within it, this view of the Bible may seem painfully inadequate and possibly lowering to the book. To me it does not seem so, for as I cannot conceive of a higher tribute than that paid to Emerson by Matthew Arnold in calling him the friend and helper of those who would live in the Spirit, although to some of Emerson's friends even this seemed mean and insufficient, so I can imagine no greater encomium upon a book than to say of it truthfully that it finds us, and we find it, in our noblest moods, — so that it becomes a real *vade mecum* in the ways of the Spirit. But there are those who, as they say, "want something to tie to," and complain bitterly because, as they think, modern students of the Bible are hacking down the hitching-post of infallibility which God himself set up. But it is no longer a matter of choice, save with those who "glory in believing instead of taking the trouble to ascertain," whether or not the Bible is of infallible, unquestionable authority; it is a question of knowledge and conscience. It would undoubtedly be very convenient, and save us a deal of thought and care, to have an infallible guide whose dicta on religion and ethics could be accepted without question and acted on without doubt; but we have not been exempted from the discipline of questioning, and the simple fact is that there is no such infallible authority in church, book, or human spirit. God has chosen, not that we should tie to anything, but that

we should be ever on the move toward himself; and only in the current of righteousness setting steadily heavenward are security and certainty. We might wish it were otherwise, but the wish can be father to the thought only when wedded to ignorance. Desires and prejudices one side, the fact is that we have in the Bible a human book, but a book in which humanity is at its best estate, — the surviving literature of a nation that had an exceptional aptitude for religion and a wonderful eye for truth. This is the fact, and it will be found better in the long run "to learn to keep house with facts" than to bar them out with our prejudices and maroon with ignorant desires.

Although intelligent Protestantism has parted company with the idea of an infallible Bible, with which Roman Catholicism never consorted, a few habits formed in its companionship still linger to vex us all. We ought to recognize and frankly aver that our theology does not rest upon the Bible, but upon the human spirit, of which the Bible is but one noble expression, and that, while we welcome it as a substantial prop, we are not dependent upon it for support. Were it possible to prove that the New Testament teaches the doctrines of the Trinity, the vicarious atonement, and the endlessness of future punishment exactly as they are believed in popular Orthodoxy, with the same certainty that it teaches the second personal advent of Jesus, we should be compelled to modify our appreciation of the book; and if it were shown that Jesus so believed and taught, of Jesus himself; but it is impossible that one who has attained the true view of the Bible should in the least waver in his denial of these dogmas. This is only an explicit statement of common Orthodox practice; for the Bibles of the holy ones of earth are not equally thumbed and dog's-eared in all parts, and the expounders of Liberal Orthodoxy take refuge under the

convenient blind of spiritual interpretation, theories of accommodation, and the like, that they may evade the obligation of trying to believe what appears to them clearly false, and at the same time claim the infallible authority of holy Scripture, more for popular effect than for their own convincing, for such doctrine as they approve.

With regard to the Bible, the mind of Protestantism will continue to hang in the wind until sails are courageously trimmed to the breeze that freshens our way. And that, let us remember, is the course charted by early Protestantism. Luther made the authority of a book hinge upon whether it preached Christ or not. Calvin said; "As to this inquiry, whence shall we be persuaded that Scripture hath flowed from God unless we have recourse to the decrees of the Church? This is as if one should inquire, Whence do we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? For Scripture lets us have a no more obscure perception of its own truth than black and white things of their color, sweet and bitter of their taste." And the French Confession of 1559, which in this respect fairly represents the early creeds, boldly declares: "We know these books to be canonical, and the sure rule of our faith, not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books upon which, however useful, we cannot found any article of faith." In applying to the contents of the several books the same tests which are here used to discriminate inspired from apocryphal books, Unitarianism is only carrying the principle of unpolluted Protestantism to its logical issue. The tragedy of "King Lear" has been enacted with the human spirit, and its two chil-

dren, the Bible and the Church, as *dramatis personæ;* only the king never really signed away his power, and is now coming to his own again.

With deepest gratitude, therefore, for the truth which the Bible brings us and for its help in the spiritual life, it must, nevertheless, be affirmed that an inspired man of to-day is more fully in the secret of the Eternal than were the inspired men of twenty centuries ago. It would be passing strange if after twenty centuries in the heart of man the Holy Spirit had not brought humanity to a more perfect knowledge of eternal things. It is perilously near the sin against the Holy Spirit not to prefer the God of Channing and Parker and Emerson to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and one is never quite so sure of this as when brooding over the book not one of whose authors bases his thought upon the words of his predecessor, but all of whom begin by saying, "The word of the Lord came unto me," and so claim for themselves present inspiration and a brighter revelation of the Almighty. And yet it does not follow, as might hastily be supposed, that therefore modern books can fully take the place of the Bible in the spiritual life; for as the sketches of a great artist, especially if arranged in chronological order with the finished picture at their head, are more valuable to a learner than the masterpiece alone, and as to workers in literature Hawthorne's "Ancestral Footstep," "Dr. Grimshaw's Secret," "Septimius Felton," and "The Dolliver Romance" (studies for the Romance of Immortality) are more helpful in their incompleteness than even "The Marble Faun" or "The Scarlet Letter," because they let us into the workshop of the author and reveal his methods, so the early strivings of the Spirit chronicled in the sacred books of the Hebrews are even more serviceable to those who would live and work in the

same spirit than the more perfect utterances through later prophets.

A second survival of the discarded theory of the Bible is in the methods by which the book is studied. I am told that there is in Boston a writing-master who boasts of being the only teacher in the town that makes a small *a* exactly right. All the rest, he says proudly, carry the shading a little too far down. It is possible that he might be a valuable instructor for a man with nothing to do but "write him down an ass" (with a small *a*) all day long; but men with work to do cannot waste time on such tomfoolery. Yet the textual criticism and the philology of the New Testament proceed upon the assumption of verbal inspiration, and are simply ridiculous apart from it. In the "Metaphors of Saint Paul," for instance, Howson says, "In examining the different parts of the New Testament, I should wish to be guided by the reverent belief that each word has a meaning; that each word is the best that could be used." But, taking the human view of the Bible, with what show of reason can we conclude that its authors were always so precise in their language as to choose the very best word? Mr. Ruskin, indeed, speaks of spending an entire forenoon over a single sentence, and states that for twenty years he has not written a word without testing it syllable by syllable; but which of us can say as much, or would submit his sermons to the scrutiny which Ruskin gives his selected lines from "Lycidas"? And are we to suppose that Amos at Bethel paused in his denunciation of woe to choose the one word in the Hebrew language, with all its extraordinary wealth of synonymes, which exactly expressed his idea; or that Jesus called the Pharisees "whited sepulchres" only when, after long and painful deliberation, he had determined that that phrase, with its associations and impli-

cations, was precisely the one which fitted his indignant scorn; or that Paul stopped the headlong rush of his argument to mouse in a Thesaurus or a dictionary of synonymes? Such niceness as this notion presupposes is entirely out of keeping with what we know of Biblical authors, and to assume it is sure to lead us astray. Moreover, to interpret Peter and Paul and James by the meanings which the words they use bear in the writings of Homer, Demosthenes, and Plato, is as if a foreigner should seek to understand James Whitcomb Riley or Uncle Remus, knowing only Chaucer and Shakspeare and Milton.

It is high time for lovers of the Bible to protest against the methods and aims of present Biblical study, not only because they are foolish and misleading, but also because many a student of theology, disgusted by this punctilious time-wasting exercise, is turned away from the book, and so loses the help which he might receive for himself and for others from this blessed pool of the Spirit. The words of the Bible are of far less importance than its thoughts, and its thoughts are indefinitely less important than the spirit that prompted them. Hence words and thoughts are comparatively useless unless they bring us to the living spirit.

It is timely to insist thus upon the right method of using the Bible, because we are clearly in the midst of a great revival of interest in its study. Not only are the Semitic languages taking their rightful place in schemes of liberal education, but the literary study of the Bible in schools and colleges, the International Sunday-school Lessons, the Correspondence Schools, etc., are directing the minds of English-speaking Protestants toward the Bible as perhaps never before. But the value of such study — yes, even the wholesomeness of it — depends

largely upon methods and aims. It was when essentially the same methods now in vogue prevailed in Israel that religion was at its lowest, and professional exegetes slew the prophet of the soul. But, as we are far enough away from the Roman Catholic Church to appreciate discriminately its real worth, to love its solemn music and stately ceremonies, to join in its prayers for the dead, and to delight in its rich symbolism, so we are far enough away from the letter of the Bible, though near enough in its spirit, to urge its value in the spiritual life and in theology without being embarrassed by its few immoralities and absurdities which oftentimes prove so distracting to others.

I wish that we, as Unitarians, might rise to our opportunity, to our duty, and help direct this awakened interest in the Bible into better channels than those which it now seeks. If, as is sometimes flippantly said, the Bible is "a fossil," it must be remembered that the study of fossils is shedding light upon the history and destiny of man. If it is a "back number," the story of Humanity is a serial, and only by reading the earlier chapters can the current issue be understood and the outcome forecasted. If it is a "dead letter," be sure that within it is the living spirit.

The time is coming — may we hasten it! — when this dear book shall take its rightful place as a manual of devotion instead of a text-book in theology, as a friend of the spirit instead of a despot over the intellect, helping us to open our ears to the present messages of the eternal Spirit, and our eyes to the unending parable of Nature, and more than all, putting and keeping us all in that great current of revelation issuing from Mount Zion which is steadily growing nearer to the perfect knowledge and fellowship of God.

Fresh study of the Bible, as in the time of Wycliffe, Tyndale, and the Authorized Version, has always been followed historically by great social and religious movements which have blessed the world. May we not hope, therefore, that this revival of Biblical study, due in part to the Revised Version of 1881, "may be so guided and governed by His good spirit" as to break forever the shackles of traditionalism, and reinstate the Bible as "the great friend and helper of all who would live in the Spirit"?

[No. 86]

THE PERFECT LAW OF THE LORD.

BY

REV. WILLIAM H. LYON, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christanity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE

PERFECT LAW OF THE LORD.

"The law of the LORD is perfect." — Ps. xix. 7.

WHEN the intellectual history of this age shall be written, and the thinker of the future shall sum up its characteristics in a word, that word will be *law*. The real world about us, the age has discovered, is not phenomena but forces; and these forces act not capriciously, but by fixed principles. The world of nature is built up, not like a pile of stones, by the addition of one independent phenomenon after another, but as a plant grows; each new fact springing from the one before it, and formed by a central force, which runs through each succeeding event as the sap of the plant runs through root and stalk and stem and bud.

But there is one application of this idea of law which we fail to make, and yet it is the one we most need to make, namely, to our moral life. In spite of our belief in the reign of law in nature, we fail to appreciate its reign in the nobler and higher realm of the inward life. The point which I wish to make clear is, that there are moral laws as well as natural laws; that the forces which work to make us what we are at any time are as unchangeable, as subject to the fixed succession of cause and effect, as the force of gravitation or electricity.

No doubt the reason why we do not detect the moral laws, is that we are accustomed to think of the moral life as immediately formed by the will. It is the one spot in the world where there is no orderly succession of events, but simply what the man chooses to do or to be at the time. It is sort of a District of Columbia, where the central power is supreme. When a man commits a crime, we lay it all to the choice of the moment. We do not think of it as having sprung from an accumulation of force in his heart, as a flash of lightning bursts out of an accumulation of electricity in the atmosphere. When a young man looks ahead into life, and sees temptations waiting for him, he says to himself: "All I have to do when I get to that temptation is to resolve not to yield to it, and the victory is won in a moment." It does not occur to him that there are moral forces behind his will which practically may prove too strong for it.

I say *practically*, because I mean that while it may be almost always *possible* for a man to resist a temptation or do a good deed (though even here we are in the world of mystery), yet, as a matter of fact, it is the condition of a man's character at the time which determines whether he *will* resist, whether he will do, or not. For a man's will works upon his life as it works upon the outward world, not directly, but through forces which he controls. When he wishes to swim against a stream, he does not merely stretch out his arms, and will to go ahead. He has to summon up his muscular strength. If he has enough, he goes up stream as his will dictates; but if he has been ill, or for any other reason has been losing his muscular power, he may will as much as he chooses, but the relentless stream forces him back, and if there are rapids or falls behind him, over he goes. So a man resists the temptation, we will say to lie, not merely by willing, but by laying

hold of the power of truthfulness which he already has, bracing himself against the conscientiousness which is already deposited in him. If he has weakened his moral powers by the practice of lying, I will not say that he cannot resist the temptation, but the chances are that he will not resist it. The stream of contrary desire, grown strong by long indulgence, will sweep him over the precipice of the lie almost before he knows it.

So, whatever be the metaphysics of the will, the practical fact is that wrong doing grows out of moral weakness, and right doing grows out of moral strength; and the practical problem of the moral life is to increase the stock of moral force.

But the moment we try to do this, we find that the character grows by law as strictly as the tree grows. Just as you cannot create a tree in a day, so you cannot create a strong and healthy character by an act of will or a few moments of moral effort. It is a growth, and the result of laws which work as accurately and as unchangingly as the plainest law of the outward world.

Take a single example of these laws, the law of exercise.

The law of exercise is the same in the moral life as in the physical; the power which is used grows in exact proportion to its use, and the power which is unused decreases in exact proportion to its neglect. The blacksmith's arm does not gain strength more surely and regularly by every stroke on his anvil, than his moral nature gains strength by every blow against temptation or for a good purpose. And just as surely as the blacksmith's arm is weakened by every day's neglect of work, so surely is his moral will weakened by every neglect of duty. We see this illustrated every day in practical life. What is a spoiled child but one who has had everything done for

him, or who has never been forced to exert his power of self-control, until, like the blacksmith who has had his work done for him, he has no strength of will, and cannot concentrate his mind or his moral powers upon anything worth doing ? Or, here is a moral Rip Van Winkle, who has let his better nature sleep for a long time while he has thrown himself into all sorts of dissipation. At last he comes to himself. "This won't do. I must change my way of living. It is high time for me to be up and making something out of my life." But what does it mean, this stiffness of the joints, this weakness of the whole system, this almost unconquerable desire to lie down again, this feeble ambition for anything good or useful ? The want of exercise has weakened whatever power was neglected. If the will is ever to be again the fresh and strong force it was, it will not be by a mere desire to do this or that, but by a persistent and careful strengthening of the power of self-control, such as a convalescent must give to his legs and arms. He must put up with a great many falls and failures. He must have patience, and a strong faith in the perfect law of God in the soul as well as in the corn-field. And what a man needs, who is not simply trying to bring himself up to the level of a former virtue, but to climb higher than he ever was before, to some ideal height, is not to wait for fortunate circumstances or influences, but to remember the simple law of exercise. When a thoughtful man looks on at any of those acrobatic feats which are so astonishing sometimes, he realizes that months and years of patient practice have gone into every one of them. There is almost no achievement of mankind that has not come by long and patient drilling. That easy run of the pianist, so light and graceful, apparently as natural and unconstrained as the patter of the rain on the roof, — do not let it deceive

you, — it is the delicate distillation of years of patient drudgery. What a wonderful genius Liszt is! How that polonaise of his soars as light and free as a lark! But under his genius were laid from twelve to fourteen hours a day of hard practice for years, says his biographer. A lady said to one of the English poets of the last century: "What a beautiful line that is! I envy you the power to make so much beauty with so little effort." "Madam," said the poet, "it was four years before I was willing to let that line go, and I am not satisfied with it yet." It is easy to heap up such illustrations of the power of patient exercise in the physical and the mental spheres. But we miss their deepest lesson if we do not see that the same law which works there, works in the making of character. The strong will grows out of the past as well as the strong arm. The delicate sense of right and wrong comes by long exercise, as well as the flexible fingers of a Rubinstein; and the music of a well-ordered and sweetly harmonized life is the product of years of patient practice in the arts of self-control and self-sacrifice.

There is no need of enumerating all the laws by which character grows. The essential thing is to see that it is a growth and not a sudden creation. We have cast the idea of miracle out of our physical life. We know that there is no such thing as an event in nature which has no connection with anything before or about it. We need to narrow our expectation of miracle in the moral life; for while we cannot help believing that the will has the power of stepping in and changing our moral tendencies to some extent, yet it is very certain that we have supposed it to have more power than it really has. It really governs only a small part of the character. We might compare it to the soft tip by which the root of a tree grows. That tip is very sensitive to all influences of heat or cold, dry-

ness or moisture, and to any resistance. It grows or stops growing, goes straight on or curves around a stone, according to the necessities of the time, with a power that seems wonderfully like intelligence. But when once it has advanced, the root behind it begins to harden and become encased with bark, and is no longer sensitive or movable. What the root finally is in shape and in direction, is the result of what that free little tip has done for it day by day. We may change the direction of the tip, but not easily that of the root it has once made.

The character of any man at a given time is like that root. It is the result of a long process of growth. To a very large extent it is hard and unchangeable by any sudden influence. It is free to move only at a small point. Even that point starts from where yesterday's growth ended, and its freedom to move is limited to a narrow range. That is to say, when I stand facing a temptation, it is not as if I had never faced one before, nor as if my ancestors had not done it for me before I was born. My feeling toward it, and my resolve to deal with it, start from the point where my own past life has left me; and my freedom to deal with it is limited by my attachment behind to old habits and to my entire nature. I am not *entirely* governed by them. I do have this free and sensitive tip to my character, but I cannot ignore the past nor the limitations which it has imposed upon me. The law of the Lord is perfect. Whatever I have sowed in my soul has grown, though I have forgotten I ever did it. I have forgotten that I yielded to this temptation yesterday. But God has not forgotten; and when I face that temptation to-day, it is harder to deal with than it was. I have forgotten that I had that tough wrestle with an old fault yesterday. But when I face it again to-day, it is not quite as strong as it was. In neither case is it or can

it be as if I had not lived yesterday. My character has grown on one side or the other by a law, which is unerring and unsleeping.

There is this one very wide difference between our will and the tip of the root, that we can change the character which the past growth has made for us. We can, by extraordinary effort, sometimes straighten our crookednesses and strengthen our weaknesses. But still the principle remains that it must be done by the laws of character, and not by any independent and sudden exercise of will. It is true that we hear of sudden conversions and great life-crises which make deep changes in men's characters. But they are like explosions of gunpowder. There are other conditions to be considered besides the spark or the present stimulus. The spark would not have exploded a pile of black sand, nor would the eloquence of Wesley or the presence of death have softened the heart of a man in a different moral condition. The fact that several people can listen to the same pleading or pass through the same crisis with such different results upon their character proves that no man is free from his past acts or influences. What he has been must always determine to a very large extent what he will be. And even in the case of genuine sudden conversions, the result is not to wipe out old scores of sin, but to give new strength to the good in the battle.

Who does not know, whether in those deep conversions which shake the whole life, or in those more common enthusiasms for goodness which sometimes stir in us all, that the old nature still remains, with its habits and its biases and its spots, and that when the first flush of ecstasy has passed, the real battle has yet to be fought? After conversion, said the old theology, must come sanctification, the gradual and persistent rooting out of the sin which the past has fixed in us. That is why so few con-

versions last, — not because they are not real at the beginning, but because the character has not stamina enough to endure so long a struggle, or because the convert is disappointed to find that the law of the Lord is perfect, and that he must reap what he has already sown before he can plant the new crop.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: Let no man fondly imagine that he can indulge himself in a wrong course of life as long as he chooses, and then check himself suddenly when there is real danger ahead. Every hour of indulgence weakens the will and strengthens the chains that hold it down. Every day of floating in the current brings him to where it is stronger, and increases the momentum in which he rushes toward the rapids of a very serious crisis in his life, if not to the falls of a sure ruin. There is no future time at which he will be as free as he is to-day. He will be sweeping either toward the right or toward the wrong with a force which grows with every hour. There are influences which come in unforeseen, and which sometimes stir a man to do more than he would of himself; just as people who live a careless and shiftless life are sometimes saved from a beggared old age by the timely will of a rich relative. But if it is folly to let one's pecuniary prosperity depend upon such outward chances, it is doubly foolish to leave one's character to the mercy of unforeseen influences, for even if they come we may not be able to take advantage of them. The providence which really interferes to save us in moral crises is the momentum of our past character.

> "Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
> Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."

Let us take a step farther. There is no reason to think that the law of God by which the past of a human life is

the starting point of its future, stops working at death. Unless we deny any existence at all hereafter, I do not see how we can help feeling that the momentum which life here has given to a man may continue to sweep him on towards his proper end in the life hereafter.

We are fond of saying that a death-bed repentance cannot save a man, because a moment cannot undo the work of a lifetime. But carry that idea further. Suppose that a man who has given himself up to the current of his evil passions, and allowed himself to be whirled along faster and faster by it, at last disappears from sight still rushing on with that fearful momentum. What then? I should not dare to say that there are no new influences which may work against the bad in him and stay his terrible course. I should not dare to set limits to the Divine resources, nor say what could or could not be done for him. But when I see how perfect the law of God is in this life, how as a man grows old in wickedness his character hardens and "sets" like a plaster image, nay, how the evil tendencies of his younger days come out from their hiding places in a more repulsive form than ever, and when I see this stiffening process still going on in him as he passes out of sight into the great unknown, I cannot smile with that optimistic confidence which some easy-going people seem to have, and say that I am *sure* it will be all right with him. At the very least, the way of return will not be short nor easy, and for all I *know*, or anybody else knows, the hardening process may go on forever. The mistake in the old doctrine is that it arbitrarily sets the limit of change at death. But death is a physical, not a moral, crisis. There is no more reason for setting the limit of change there than at any previous moment. But that the probability of change does grow less and less, and that there *may* be a point somewhere in the dim future beyond

which it is extremely improbable that the soul will ever return to virtue, seems to me the plainest common sense.[1]

So that conception of law which is dawning upon our view of the moral life does not decrease responsibility, as hasty people sometimes think; it makes it vastly greater and more solemn. If there be *no* relation of cause and effect in the moral life, if at any time a man can do just what he chooses, then let us do what we choose to-day, for to-morrow we can begin all over again if we like; but if the reign of law extends into the character, if the power of habit means anything, if the future grows out of the past as the unbending tree out of the flexible sapling, then what we do to-day in this world is a very grave thing, and life has gained a new seriousness, not a new recklessness, from the idea of "a perfect law of the Lord."

[1] I have spoken of the pains and penalties of moral evil or of wrong doing in the world to come. How long they will endure, I know not. Whether they will issue in the reformation and happiness of the sufferer, or will terminate in the extinction of his conscious being, is a question on which the Scripture throws no clear light. Plausible arguments may be adduced in support of both these doctrines. — W. E. Channing *The Evil of Sin.*

There is virtue in sorrow to educate and perfect the good, but none that we can see to reclaim the wicked. It does not appear that punishment in this world has always the effect, or has in the majority of cases the effect, to reform the sinner; contrariwise, it is notorious that men continue to sin and suffer to the day of their death What authority have we for supposing that this process is arrested hereafter; or for not supposing that the sinner will go on sinning and suffering everlastingly, or till evil becomes so predominant in the soul as utterly to quench its moral life, and conscious suffering ends in everlasting death? Who shall say that sin, once established, may not grow to be supreme and irremediable, — that the habit of transgression contracted in this world, and confirmed by every fresh transgression, may not become a necessity of nature strong as fate and deep as life? — F. H. Hedge: *Reason in Religion,* page 393.

A new seriousness, and yet a new confidence, — "The law of the Lord is *perfect*." It does not work on one side alone. It does not merely keep the evil and the weakness we entrust to it. It keeps the strength and the goodness too. There is no *pure* influence to which that sensitive tip of our will has exposed itself which has not drawn us toward good. There is no noble direction toward which it has not stiffened, and given a permanent tendency to our lives. The good we have done will stand by us. Nothing but an evil present can nullify a good past; and in what we are to-day, every resistance to temptation, every act of charity and love and nobility has laid its stone.

As to the future, this idea of law, though it vindicates the terrible truth of the old doctrine, tears away its terrible fallacies. How many a death of a noble man or woman has left a horrible agony in the hearts of those who are left behind, at the thought that a lifetime of justice and honor has been of no use, because certain church rites have not been observed, or certain creeds believed! The anguish of bereavement is great enough at its best; but when to the necessity of parting for a few years is added the terrible conviction of parting for eternity, for some alleged sin in the loved one which the Church has created, but would not pardon, for which no amount of natural loveliness or genuine nobleness could atone, — then what a fearful thing the hour of death has been made! That blasphemy is not all dead yet, even in its most terrible form. Only a few weeks ago, said a letter to the "Christian Register," a mother went insane when the minister told her that her baby was forever lost because it had not been baptized. It is a commonplace to hear that said of grown people; but the new day of common sense is dawning. Thank God that honest men may at last die in peace. For the law of the Lord is perfect, and no law of the

Church can change it. What a man has gained he keeps, here or hereafter, if he is only true to it. When we see a man whose life has been full of honest endeavor after righteousness passing out into the dark hereafter, we shall think of him as an oarsman who has pulled his best so far, and, though he may rest on his oars as he shoots under the dark bridge, we shall know that his moral momentum will carry him through till he takes stroke again on the other side.

RELIGION OF HUMANITY, THE

By Octavius B. Frothingham

Size, 5 3-8 x 7; pages, 338; price, $1.00 *net;* postage, 11 cents.

A SINGULARLY clear and strong exposition of fundamental religious principles and ideas that lie deeply rooted in human nature and the moral order. Free from tradition and convention, with keen philosophical and spiritual insight into religious truths, the author presents original and acute views of the moral ideal, the conscience and its education, the problem of good and evil. In his rational and reverent interpretation of the nature of God and Jesus, in his critical examination of the Bible and the belief in immortality, he holds the opinion that the religion of humanity "finds its authentication on the basis which humanity furnishes, draws from humanity its inspiration, consults humanity for its principle, adopts, on the whole, the confession that humanity has most persistently made. . . . For human nature, under liberty, will vindicate itself as a divine creation."

TRANSCENDENTALISM IN NEW ENGLAND

By Octavius B. Frothingham

Size, 5 3-4 x 7 3-4; pages, 395; price, $1.00 *net;* postage, 16 cents.

THIS is not a critical or philosophical account of Transcendentalism in New England, but a plain history which presents the subject with the smallest possible admixture of discussion, either in defence or opposition. The author has avoided the metaphysics of his theme, by presenting cardinal ideas in the simplest statement he could command, and omitting the details that would only cumber a narrative. The fundamental ideas of the philosophy, however, are here traced to their historical and speculative sources, and their tendencies defined. The author was once himself an ardent Transcendentalist, but if, as Renan says, "in order to judge a faith one must have confessed and abandoned it," he still retains enough of his old sympathy and admiration to do his subject justice.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 Beacon Street, Boston

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 87]

WHAT THE WORLD WANTS OF US.

BY

REV. CHARLES F. DOLE.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

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WHAT THE WORLD WANTS OF US.

I TAKE a familiar parable from the great chandelier in a church. It is made of many separate burners or lights. I can imagine these lights to be scattered about over a square mile of ground, so that looking from a little distance, you would scarcely know that they were there. Not one of them by itself would give brightness enough to see to read. But massed together, these separate lights can be seen from afar, and they fill the building.

I am apt to be appalled when I think of the littleness and insignificance of the individual life. The world is so big, there are so many people in it, things move on so vast a scale and with such aggregation of great populations, that it seems as if the life of any one of us, however large and good in itself, scarcely counted for anything. It seems even as though the lives of the great men of the past, which once, like famous ships, filled the narrow stream of human history, if they sailed by to-day, would soon appear like specks of sails upon the ocean. The solitary prophet or reformer could once attack an evil, an abuse, an injustice, and almost single-handed could hope to slay it. But the crying evils which afflict society to-day go by wholesale; they are involved in the warp and woof of universal society. A thousand individuals

may deplore the factory system, the tenement-house system, the sweating system, the new immigration of ignorance, the selfish and corrupt politics; but no individual is large or strong or wise enough by himself to change or check these systems, or stem the tide of selfish politics running with the momentum of accumulated millions of money.

On the other hand, we are daily impressed with the power and the helpfulness of combinations of individuals. What the one alone cannot do, a few banding together can accomplish as perhaps never before. If you want to do anything in this world, mass your power, mass your light, bring your little separate burners into a chandelier. This is the law and condition, if you wish your lives to count for all that there is in them. This is the law of business and success in it: mass your power and your capital. This is the law of reform: if you want to keep our government safe and pure, or to help do justice in a particular direction, as to the Indians, mass your influence, join hands and purses with the men who think with you.

This is also the law in religion. It might seem that all that the world needs is to see individual lives of faith and hope and charity. But the world does not begin to get on merely by the power of such scattered individual lives. The darkness of the world, its ignorance, its sins, its wretchedness, its poverty, its doubt and scepticism, simply absorb these scattered lights. The world wants in religion the sustained, concentrated power of the chandelier.

This is the idea of a church. The community wants light. It wants to be made perfectly sure where the great lines of life run. It wants to be assured that light, and not darkness, is the essential victorious power of this

universe. It wants not to doubt that justice and goodness reign in the skies and traverse the earth. It wants to believe that life at its hardest and sternest is yet amply and gloriously worth living. It wants to see, not Death, with its black jaws, waiting at the end of the road, but the gates of life standing open and making the face of Old Age shine with hope. The Church is set to meet this need of greater light. A hundred, five hundred, a thousand men and women, bring all the faith and hope and love that they know, and say to the world, See, here is light, here is goodness eternal, truth immutable, the shining ideals, the way to God! They say this very feebly, perhaps; there is some trouble with their light that makes it dim. But even these complaints are a tribute to the world's need of precisely the quality of light that a church is set to furnish.

Possibly some imagine that the need of churches is passing away with the changes of our civilization. I urge that the need of the concentrated light of religion was never so great in every branch of human life. So far from dispensing with churches and leaving religion to depend on individual impulses, we hold that the great call is for better churches and more concentrated power and light in them.

This brings me to say what I have specially in mind about the place of our Liberal churches in this eager, busy, restless, and hungering age. We happen to be challenged just now to answer what we are good for, or why the world should want us. I heard lately the words of such a challenge from a very thoughtful Harvard professor. "You Unitarians have done excellent and valuable work in the past," he said; "but what are you here for now? What message or gospel have you that men should look to you for further help?"

Let me show as plainly as possible what the Liberal churches stand for. A great crisis in morals and religion is upon us. There was never a greater or more profound crisis, or a time more thrilling to live in. The light of religion — what little there was in the world — has been commonly supposed, among Protestants, to shine from certain great and sacred candlesticks in the distant past. There was one luminous tract in human history. It was over the Hebrew land. It culminated in the life of Jesus. When Paul and Peter died, the original light ceased. What light the world had since was only by imperfect reflection, at best, from that great "star of Bethlehem." Where that particular star did not shine, no clear light about God or heaven could be. But this came to be meagre and negative to tell men. Further and more remote, as the centuries passed, grew this bright and beautiful light. Between the men of to-day and the life of Jesus intervened mists, obscuring what that life really was. "Look to Jesus!" the cry was; and, lo! as men looked, they did not see the real Jesus at all. And still the cry went, "Look to Jesus!" for else, except by reflection, you cannot have any light. We see men deliberately turning from the coming day, straining their eyes to get that distant light of the Hebrew story. We see multitudes tired and hopeless about it. They have not any light. They have thought that they once had it; but it has become obscure. "Does God care? Does God love? Is right at the heart of the universe? Is life, and not death, the end of our being?" men ask; but they have not the faith to answer, or even to trust. These are the men and women whom we can help.

We stand, first and foremost, for light, — for the getting and giving it. We stand for all the light that there is, and for the making of more. We have all that there is.

Light is not a commodity shut up in some corner, to which privileged persons only have the key. To hear some people talk, it would seem that we did not know what we believe! We believe in light — in all glorious examples, in all noble visions, in all beautiful lives, in all that reveals goodness, makes faith, deepens love, or quickens hope. We believe that light comes by reflection. It is precious always, say we. Gather it in your mirrors, and make it shine again. But we do not think that light comes only by reflection, as in the cold moon or a burnished surface. It comes originally: it leaps out of everything that is on fire. It develops out of life, and wherever real life is. It comes straight from God, and lighteneth every man that comes into the world.

We care a thousand-fold more for what we call the method of Jesus to produce light than we care even to see Jesus. We care to be filled with humanity and set ablaze with love by whatever touches us, whether it be that beautiful life far away or the face of a child in our home.

But others, you say, stand for this, too. We have no monopoly of light. Thank God, the more light, the better! We believe that there was never more faith and hope and love in our world than now. And is this a reason why we should give up our grand business of making the light shine, because others are doing the same? Did we not agree that the world is as yet, on the whole, very dark? Does any place exist where the people are not crying for the pure light of religion? Do not multitudes want faith and hope more than anything else?

But we are not doing precisely the same as others. Besides the great common mission, we have a distinct mission, too. There are ever so many things which have been mixed up with religion, and thought important to

religion, which the world to-day is finding it very hard to believe. Religion has been taught on the basis of miracles and ancient authority. Many question that authority. As we said before, if they must get their light by reflection alone, they are going without. We come to these people with a clear gospel. We say that religion holds good, — that faith, hope, love, are realities, whatever you think about the old basis of authority. The light is the fact, not the form of the lamp or the frame that supports it, or the particular variety of oil that makes it. Thus we are perfectly free of the questions about the authority of religion which perplex so many. If any one has a doubt about light and what it is and where it comes from, we have only to say to him, Look at it, use it, enjoy it, and doubt not that it comes "from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

It is here that I make my appeal to you. The world is as yet very slow to believe this beautiful and simple gospel. Almost all the religion that the world has ever seen has been associated with certain ancient forms and with the men who held these forms. All the churches have had opaque and colored shades over their lamps. They have taught men that the light would not shine if you discarded these shades. The world has not really seen clear light without the shades. Many do not believe that light can be made to shine long if you take the shades off. What they want more than anything else is not argument to prove what you say, but object-lessons to assure them of the fact.

We have already plenty of private and individual object-lessons of this. It is wonderful how many persons are to-day working out beautiful lives, deeply religious, as the prophets worked them out, as Jesus did, without any use whatever of the customary shades

of tradition and authority. But these scattered individual lives of religious men and women, whose light shines free of dogma and doubtful traditions, do not begin to meet the needs of our age. You point to Mr. Emerson's life or Theodore Parker's, and men shake their heads, and they say that such a life is exceptional. It could not have got its light except by reflection. It was a sort of product, they say, of the old traditional religion. You cannot have a church on the simple basis of Emerson. If you depend on so simple a religion, the next generation will be plunged into darkness. This is exactly what men are saying.

And yet all thoughtful persons have a suspicion to-day that unless we can organize religion and make our faith shine on just that simple basis, and quite free of the old opaque shades, the next generation cannot have any religion that will satisfy its needs. These opaque shades are growing intolerable. Men are wishing — we talk with such in other churches — that the world could bring up its children to a simple faith in God, that the world could keep its wonderful hope of a life eternal, on the simple grounds upon which individuals among us already hold their faith and keep their hope bright.

Men look around for adequate object-lessons to give them such public assurance. They want your light strong, not dim. They want it steady, as though it were not going out, or else they will go back and get such light as they can through the old traditional shades that they do not believe in.

It is here that we have not begun yet to see our opportunity. We have not acted as if we had anything that the world wanted. We have not thought that we existed except for ourselves. I submit to you that the world needs clearly to know, what many now hold in doubt, that

we believe in religion; that our churches are alive, and not dead; that our people are loyal, not indifferent; that a Liberal church can be a growing church, an earnest church, a hospitable church; that a Liberal church can be full, and not empty; that its people can sing together, and work together, too, as all hearty and whole-souled and happy people always do sing and work.

There is not a member of an Orthodox church about us who, in his heart of hearts, would not like to see a church succeed on our basis, would not like to be convinced that the light of God is around us to-day as really as it was in Palestine ages ago. Show it to us! men cry. Where are the churches that stand for this? Where is their blazing chandelier?

And right here I wish to speak to our young people and children. The world is judging our religion by you. Can the simple religion keep its children? men ask. Will its young men and women be loyal to it? Will they do anything for it? Do they believe in it?

I will tell you what men are actually saying about you. They say that the children of a Liberal church are apt to desert it: few of them are there on a Sunday; the boys leave its Sunday-school, where no men stay to command their respect; its young men, riding bicycles across country, do their best to break down the institutions of the past, thoughtless of setting up anything better. It is said that the young people of the Liberal church are worldly and mercenary. It is said that we cannot recruit our own ministry from them.

This impression about our children frightens people who want to believe in the beautiful, simple religion. You children could do more to make the true light shine, to disabuse prejudice, to help men believe in a good God, than all the sermons preached from our pulpits in the last

fifty years. Let us train youth to be depended upon to stand in that place or march to that post, wherever they can do the most good. Let such young people stand together, as some even now wish to stand, resolved to make their church a success, their chandelier the mightiest light in the place! You have no idea what such a light as this would do for religion in America. One such church as this would kindle the light of another, and the blaze would go through the land. People would tell of it in the West and the South. "Yes," they would say, "the religion has come that thoughtful men can believe in, free of dogma, that fears no questions, that meets doubts. The religion of pure faith, hope, love, is a reality." "And the children stand by it, support it, believe in it?" "Yes, very heartily." Ah! then the religion of the generations to come is secure. Then faith in light and good and heaven shall rule the coming world. Would to God we might live to see such a church in every town!

I speak quite free of mere personal feeling. But I am impressed with the sense that we and our children are not only in danger of losing our clear sight of the great and ideal things for ourselves, but of actually obscuring these things for others. As though when men were asking the question, "Will the new and freer life of religion hold good?" we were understood to be answering, "No."

If I could make you see in some measure what our chance is, what is asked of us, what the need is that we have to meet, I believe that we should have a new access of power. I believe that hardly one of our men would be as much as tempted to choose the Sunday paper in place of his church. I believe that you would tell others of the high things that we here consider, and bring your friends and neighbors with you, and especially your children, till your church was full. We should not ask anything — the

giving of money or time or labor, for charity or reform or education or the spread of religion, in our city or elsewhere — in vain. I believe that all our young men and women would come into our Bible classes, eager to learn the noblest religious thought of our age. I believe that our Young People's Clubs would rise to a new type of life and effort, not less social, but more thoughtful and earnest. I believe that our churches would become great, strong, helpful centres of the higher life of man, in whose range no doubt of God or man or duty or truth or love would be possible.

I wish to make it plain that the church is for more than yourselves. I wish to appeal, not to your selfishness or your regard for individual culture, but to your generosity and your humanity. The Church is the great chandelier made up of the lamps of all of us, that men may see to read the meanings of life. We owe it to the dark world to make this light clear and bright. We owe our little individual burners for the sake of the whole. We owe this, as all other men owe it who care for the vast destinies of mankind. We owe it especially as those who are working out a bold, beautiful, and necessary experiment in the direction of a simple religion, at a time when all need to see our light blaze, while few believe yet that it can blaze and endure. We say that it can. Let us show that it can. Let us be a church to make men believe, and not doubt, our religion.

[No. 88]

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

BY

REV. WILLIAM H. LYON, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

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THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." — 1 Cor. i. 18.

The cross to-day is an ornament and an honor. It tops the spires of splendid churches. It is covered with jewels and worn at the throats of rich women. It is stamped on elegantly bound prayer-books. It gives the ground plan for grand cathedrals.

It was not so nineteen centuries ago. Then it was the apparatus of a disgraceful punishment. It was the gallows of the day. If some old Roman, Cicero or Seneca, should come among us to-day and see the cross so held in honor, he would be shocked. He would feel as you and I would feel if nineteen centuries from now we should come back to the earth and find the most sacred places — the altars, the spires, the bosoms of priests and nuns — decorated with the shape of the modern gallows.

The reason is that once a spirit shone from the cross which utterly overcame the disgrace of it, and turned it into glory. The improbability that any one can ever make the gallows so glorious is the measure in part of the power of that life and death nineteen hundred years ago. The first word, then, in the preaching of the cross, is the conquest of circumstances by character. If

you take some hideous thing and hold it up against the sun, it will be lost in the blaze of light. Hold it against the gas-jet, and it is the flame that is lost; you see only the repulsive thing. So a weak character is lost in the repulsiveness of the circumstances amid which it is placed. Its dignity seems to itself to be gone. It feels degraded by the work it has to do, the burdens it has to bear, the adversities it has to suffer. The world, looking at these circumstances, sees only them and not the soul that lies behind them. But a strong soul shines through and all around its circumstances. You do not think of them at all if they be unworthy; and if they be splendid, you think of them only as a fit setting for the soul. Are there not houses into which you go, very humble and very plain, which you hardly think of as such, so beautiful is the life that is lived there? When the man comes into the humble room a glory comes with him that gilds the furniture with a gold which the cabinet-maker cannot lay on, and fills the room with a light which no glittering chandelier could give. Another man might come into the room, a man who must borrow all the glory he has from his surroundings or his havings, and at once you feel the poverty of the room, and pity the man so circumstanced. Or it may be a fine house; but as the owner comes into the room, it seems somehow to dwarf and dim him. The house seems to own him, and not he the house.

Of course there are circumstances that lift the man. We can no more be entirely independent of them than of our body, which is only our nearest circumstance. But the man must be large enough to control them, — to make them work for him, and not himself for them. Money may help a good life, as a skilful setting helps the lustre of a good gem. It may give a man the fine quality of

independence, and set him free from that temptation to subserviency and hypocrisy and flattery which so eats at the self-respect of the poor. As the wind can get no hold upon the water that has a thin film of oil upon it, and cannot work it up into foaming waves, so many of the vexations and temptations of life may pass harmlessly over the weak man who is covered with a little property. But the lesson which every strong life has taught the world is the power it has to *give* to circumstances, and not to borrow from them. The heroes of the world — the world of business as well as the world of scholarship, or travel, or war, or reform — have told us with the unanimous testimony of their experience that there is no obstacle so great, no degradation so deep, no bodily infirmity so crippling, no lack of influence so discouraging, no disappointment so disastrous, that it may not be not only overcome, but transformed into strength and the means of new success.

But the preaching of the cross goes beyond even this. It speaks not only to those who are in misfortune, but especially to those who feel their misfortune as a disgrace. To some extent this is true of all spirited and energetic souls. To fail is very near to sin. The world punishes it almost as if it were the same. In fact, it often welcomes the sinner where it shuts out the unfortunate. Small wonder, then, that the disappointed man should feel the bruise of failure almost as keenly as if it were the sting of dishonor. It is just to this frame of mind — morbid, if you choose, but certainly real and often unavoidable — that the preaching of the cross appeals. It holds up that weak and falling form upon the instrument of disgrace, side by side with the world-wide honor and fame, yes, the deification which has come upon it, and bids the shame-stricken man of to-day not to faint or despair. It tells

him not only to look at itself, but to look at the cases within his own knowledge — yes, at some facts in his own life — where adversity has been turned into strength. To them that are foolish, the lesson will have no value. They will continue to think only of the present trouble and disappointment, and look forward to no change. But to those who have the strength of soul and will that can save, it is indeed the power of God. It is a glorious reminder of that infinite strength which is ready to be drawn upon by every brave man or woman who, though cast down, refuses to be destroyed, — though faint, yet pursues.

So the first lesson of the cross is the conquest of circumstances by character. The second is that suffering is not necessarily the result of the sin of the sufferer. Whether it is the result of sin at all we must consider later; but it certainly shows that it may be no judgment upon him who suffers. Here is one who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; yet he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The first thought of one who should see the crucifix would be a wonder what that man had done that he should suffer so, and in so wondering he would voice a certain guilty instinct in us all that what we suffer is the punishment of the sins we have done. In older and less thoughtful days this idea was stronger than now, and great was the additional suffering which came from it. That the insane were possessed of devils whom their sinful condition had invited in; that blindness and lameness were the signs, as they were the penalties, of some past wickedness; that poverty, childlessness, early death were branded with the black mark of a disgraceful cause, — this is the old superstition which still lurks around us. Jesus answered it in words which ought forever to have banished it. He answered it still more plainly, though unconsciously, by his life and death. That

poverty is in itself disgrace, that to labor with the hands is degradation, that to be shut out from the favor and company of the high and mighty of the land is dishonor, are ideas that can have no further currency in the mouths, or approval in the ears, of those who believe that Jesus was even a good man; and the actual bodily sufferings which he underwent, yet which, though they were directly inflicted by men, must have had the permission of God, are the answers to those who have said that sickness and pain are the results of sin in those who suffer. Jesus did not sin, and yet he suffered.

But the same is true of his death. Here was not only death, but a premature death, for he was but a little over thirty. Has it nothing to say to that question so often asked in agony, "Why should so good a man die and so many bad men be left?" That question comes out of an uneasy feeling that the death we mourn, like the first one in the old Scripture story, came from sin. We resent the premature death as a slur, somehow, upon the life. We cannot get the lurking superstition out of our minds. To this the death of Jesus gives at least a negative answer. That one so holy should die so soon severs sin from death as by the shears of Atropos. Again, it is granted that the death came from man and not by disease. Still it was permitted. God cannot be cleared from complicity in it. Moreover, the great physicians who have studied the symptoms given in the Gospel declare their belief that Jesus was of weak constitution, and that he died largely from the effects of his sorrow, — died of a broken heart.

So pain and death are no signs of sin in him who undergoes them. That is the negative lesson of the cross. But that they are often the result of others' sin, — that is the positive lesson of the cross. Jesus hangs there as the

symbol through all time of that dark and pathetic fact of human life that the innocent suffer for the guilty, — not instead of them, but because of them. We know the old *doctrine* of the atonement, now so fast falling into *silence*, even among those whose religious ancestors once proclaimed it, — that God, angry with the sins of men, would or could accept no reconciliation except through the sacrifice of his divine son. We have no quarrel now with that old doctrine. Error in form, as it is now confessed to be, it yet held a great sad truth which the observation of every day repeats in the concrete, — that the sins of men fall not only on their own shoulders, but upon the shoulders of the innocent. The *race* is always punished for sin, but the consequences do not always drop, as we should think they would, upon the sinner alone. The little child comes into the world, suffers a few months, and gives up its life. It has done nothing wrong. It bears the dreadful consequence of its father's or mother's carelessness or wickedness. Or it carries through years a burden of crippling or disease that increases with the consciousness of it and the experience of its results, not because it has sinned, but because of the ignorance or the indulgence of some one whose blood is in its veins. There are hearts dark with grief and shame, not because they have done evil, but because some one of the family has gone wrong. He will bear his own burden of dishonor and banishment for his fraud, but these others, who had no part in the crime, have perhaps a keener shame. We are all victims in some way of some other man's sin, as we all in some way make other men suffer for our sin. Why this should be we cannot stop to ask now. We can only see as we pass that God punishes us in this way through our love, that if the sight of our own disadvantage has no effect upon us, the sight of the woe which our sin brings upon those

we love better than ourselves may touch us. And he punishes us also through our admiration, that we may realize how enormous is the sin which not only makes us suffer, but those who are good and noble. But of this fact of the suffering of the innocent because of the guilty, and of the subtile punishment which God sends upon us through what is tenderest and highest in our hearts and souls, the cross is the symbol.

That was no legal fiction which was acted out upon Calvary. It was no God masquerading in human form, seeming to suffer that another God might seem to accept the sacrifice. Nor was it such a travesty of justice as God *accepting* the suffering of an innocent being instead of the punishment of the real offenders. If that be justice, then all our statutes and courts and prisons are horrible mistakes, and all the instinctive workings of the human conscience are dreadful distortions. There is no vicarious atonement in this sense. There is no substitution, no calling the innocent guilty, or the guilty innocent. Calling them so will never make them so, even though it were the Almighty who called them. God requires no reconciliation. He is always ready to forgive and restore, as gravitation is always ready to take the stone back to the earth when you let it go. It is man that must be reconciled to God; man that must see the enormity of his sin as God sees it; man that must come back home of his own free will, by the working of his own soul, by the clearing of his own sight. It is upon man that the suffering of the innocent Christ is to work, that he may see, as it were, in capital letters, the lesson which is printed small in his own home, — short-sighted man that he is, — that he may see how wide the effects of his sin fly, and how high they reach. Our life is no shooting gallery, in which the shots we fire amiss are kept

safely in. They fly out and wound others, — not only the chance passer-by, but the children of our own hearts, the friends of our own bosoms. No man can see that cross, and understand it, without running back with a shudder to his own life, to see what he has done to infect the world with sin, and with the sorrow and pain that come from it; without turning anxiously to the distresses of those who are dear to him, their failures and their woes, to see what part in them his own sins have played. All misfortune, indeed, is not the consequence of sin, but much of it is; and human woes, when the cross looms above them, stir the conscience as well as the sympathy. They make us shiver with a sense of personal responsibility. The sin that made this good man suffer, that darkened that woman's life, that brought disease and pain and uselessness into that child's whole mortal career, is the same sin that I have cherished. The act was not mine, but the roots of it are in me. How soon may not some sudden shoot from them spring up and bear the same poison to another's life! That is the warning, rebuking, saddening lesson which the cross brings into our careless and thoughtless moments. Do not curse the Jew for that fearful consequence of his bigotry and stubbornness. That is over. But see whether the same conceit of your own infallibility be not in yourself. If it is, let the cross warn you, that you be not yourself fit for cursing.

But there is a more lovely lesson than this which streams from the cross. It shows us how beautiful is the sacrifice for others' sake which is willingly made! The death and disgrace of Jesus were not necessary. He could have avoided them. He could have gone back to his carpenter's bench or to his solitary musings over the prophets of his people. His sacrifice was a willing one.

He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. What befell him there was no unforeseen entanglement. He knew, if not the details, yet the main result that was to come.

And it was not for his own sake, — not, as even his nearest disciples stubbornly believed to the last, to make himself a king. He had met that temptation and silenced it forever. The question as between his own will and God's was settled. He had the truth to speak. He had the love of his people in his heart. The more they turned against him, the more he determined to give himself for them, because the more they showed how much they needed it. The cross stands, then, for deliberate and loving sacrifice for others' misfortune and sin, and so stands for the sweetest and noblest thing God ever lets the sun shine on.

There is more of this in the world than we often think. We look out into the struggling mob of laborers and employers, the whole mass of men and women, who seem to be wrestling with each other in the mad rush for money, and we grow cynical. We talk of the material age and the love of gain. But in the very fiercest of those wrestlers and racers there may lie a warm and tender love, which is the motive power of all his struggling. It is not for himself, perhaps, that he rushes for money, but for the future of a little child at home, for the comfort of an invalid wife, for a boy at college, carelessly flinging hard-earned money away, or a girl who grows shallow and frivolous by the very love he gives her. Walk through the cotton mill. These are not interesting faces, but there are affections which can light up those faces with the very glory of heaven. They are capable of great sacrifices. "The short and simple annals of the poor" are worth the cynic's reading. Your daily paper, if you read it with

eyes open for such things, will show them to you. There was that family of a sick mother and three or four children, in New York, turned out upon the sidewalk for default in the rent. The grandmother and sister took them up into their own room in the attic, and the whole six or seven starved together in the one room till some one found them and gave to them out of the general abundance. As the baby Christ was said to light up the old stable into which he was born, with the grace of his countenance, so that willing sacrifice, brought to birth among the rags and squalor of a New York tenement attic, made it beautiful with celestial light.

All around us are those who are quietly bearing the discomfort and the privation, the mortification and the shame, which are the crosses on which the good are fastened for the help of the bad. All labors of reformers; all pains taken by the sound for the sick and the insane, by the upright for the criminal, by the happy for the outcast and the foundling, — all the unromantic cares in homes for those who need or submit to be suffered for, — all these in varying degree, as the stars differ in glory, are points where heaven shines through the fogs and clouds of the earthly state. Sometimes a prominent case lights up the principle. We all remember the sadness that went over the country years ago when a trusted cabinet officer, a brave general in the war, was found guilty of gross fraud. He stopped the investigation at a certain point, pleaded guilty, and went into the disgrace that awaited him. At last he died; and it came out, at least to many of us, for the first time, that the sin he had suffered for was not his, but that of a member of his family, and that the point at which he stopped the investigation was the point at which her guilt was about to be exposed. He shouldered the odium, and staggered

under it till he fell into his grave. It was well done. It was a braver and higher deed than any war record could have shown for him. But there are many of them. They are not all high enough to be seen of many, but their sacrifice is great, and as great is the willingness with which they make it, if only the object of it can be helped.

Such is the symbolism of the cross. As the anchor speaks to us of faith, so the cross speaks to us of love. It is a misfortune that abuse of it has banished it from our churches and our chambers. It belongs not to Catholic or Episcopalian, but to the Christian. It is the flag of Christianity. It is the sign of what is deepest and purest in the influence of the master; and if it could only speak to us of the things it really stands for, it should tower above every church and shine in every home. And even as it is, it might well stand before us every morning as we rise for the day's life, as a reminder of that unselfishness which is the centre of Christianity and the crown of manhood.

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[No. 89]

THE THREE STAGES

OF

UNITARIAN THEOLOGY.

BY

JAMES MARTINEAU, DD., LL.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

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THE

THREE STAGES OF UNITARIAN THEOLOGY.

"Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." — Isaiah lxiii. 16.

The true prophetic heart, may we not say, breathes through these words, and gives them a music that can never die away. They are the tones of a spirit tender yet clear and strong; reverent in memory, open to love, warm with the humanities, yet driven from the sunny front of life, and in its retreat falling back on the sheltering loneliness of God. And do they speak for the Hebrew poet alone? Rather do they pitch the note of a perpetual hymn, caught up and delivered on, age after age, by the noblest voices of history. In the education of our race it is inevitable that the children should outgrow the father's house, and emigrate to new lands of thought; and could the men of old come back among us, and look at us with their patriarchal eyes, who knows but that we might ask their blessing in vain, and Abraham perchance would be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not? To hard and driving natures, content to start the world afresh with each generation, this may seem a mere sentimental grief. But the really progressive minds, that appear to run furthest from the past, are most conscious of their debt to it, most tinctured by its inner life, and most love its venerable names; and for them to be treated as outcasts from the family of the faithful, and find themselves exiles from

the communion to which they cling, is a lot more pathetic than stripes and bonds. A divine necessity, however, is laid on them to bear it. They cannot linger in semblances; they cannot tamper with words; they cannot look away from the light, and play it off in tricks of artificial refraction; they cannot breathe the air of half-truth and half-pretence which maintains the sluggish pulses of the world, but must pant aloft into the untainted elements of life. And as this thirst for the pure reality, this sensitiveness to the poison of falsehood, this inability to worship except in absolute simplicity of spirit, must needs take them apart from the level of human sympathy, and often leave the tenderest affections the most alone, what remains but that they fling themselves from the last brink of earthly reliance, and in a passion of infinite trust cast themselves upon the only True, and cry, "Thou, Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is everlasting"?

No reformers have been more unconditionally thrown upon this sublime trust than those whose works we celebrate and prolong this day. As if to justify their own protest against the Trinitarian theology, and prove for them how it darkened human affections, they have been treated as aliens from the sacred commonwealth; and because they would not at Athanasius's bidding worship they knew not what, but abiding by the religion of Christ, would pray only as he prayed, and own no more than his two great commandments, and know no blessing but his beatitudes, they have been thrust outside the walls of the "City of God," and told that the fathers of the faithful are ignorant of them, and the Christian Israel acknowledges them not. Be it so. These chartered believers may shut up themselves, but cannot enclose our God. Without, as well as within, he lives; and as the gates close behind us, and we go into the open and solitary place, where the cathedral bells are lost, and the litanies

are heard no more, newer voices of his Spirit may perhaps float to us on the silence, and we may grow into larger apprehension by simply being alone with him. That there really has been a natural expansion and enrichment of Unitarian theology, favored by the very banishment into which it has been driven, will appear from a mere glance at the successive stages of its modern history.

Religion, even in its most intellectual forms, can never entirely lose its symbolical character; and the real interest of its doctrines will usually be found far behind the apparent. Had the question respecting the person of Christ concerned merely the composition of an historical individual, human or superhuman, it could never have stirred so intense a passion, and tracked its way through Christendom with such a line of storm. The secret of the strife lies deeper. He stands in it not for himself, but for mankind; and the doubt whether within that meek and suffering form the divine essence is hid truly means to those who shrink from it whether from us too any divine life is possible, and the Father of spirits will take up his abode with us. It is not the Jesus of the biographers, but the ideal of our spiritual humanity, the type and head of our race in its heavenly relations, whose seamless robe has been torn by the rude hands of controversy; and were it not that his problem and ours were bound up together, that his divineness was the assumed measure of our communion with God, and that what was asked about him was answered about us, the inquiry must have tired itself out in traversing the ages. But the mind returns with unexhausted wonder to the questions, "What are we?" "Where do we stand in the hierarchy of being?" "Do we belong only to Nature beneath us, or can we live in love with God above us?" and under the disguise of a *Christology* these *human* issues have ever been upon their trial, and to those whose ears are open have mingled with the

voices of angry disputants an undertone, not of softening piety alone, but of unsuspected sympathy.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an economy for linking together the human nature and the divine, — for snatching man, as an exception, from the general physiology of the world, where he would only, like the cattle, be a creature of the universal Maker; for recognizing his sonship and divine similitude as an eternal reality, whether known to himself or unknown, whether reserved in heaven or become historical on earth; and for bringing out his implicit consciousness of this in the whispered pleadings of a Spirit supreme above his own. God in the Universe, God in History, God in the personal Soul, — these three are separately recognized, yet blended into one, in the formula against which we protest; and in dissolving that formula we may be thought to hazard the balance of these relations, and to insulate ourselves on some hard and narrow unity. Our simpler conception, it is affirmed, is visibly inadequate both to the fulness of the divine perfection and the depth of human experience, and repels the richer and riper souls of Christendom by the Mahomedan baldness of its piety and the stoical evenness of its human ideal. Above all, we are assured, do we fail to provide the needful mediation between heaven and earth. The Christ of the creeds, being *both* God and man, can bring the two natures into harmony. The Christ of the Arians, being *neither* God nor man, is cut off from both, and cannot blend them in accord. The Christ of the Unitarians, being *wholly* man, carries in himself the alienated nature, and lies under the disqualification he is needed to remove. He may be an *example* upon the human level, but cannot, it is said, lift us to the divine. Without denying either all that is claimed for the Trinitarian scheme or all that is charged on our own, we shall find something to countervail the merits of the former and to repair the defects of

the latter in the growth of our theology during the last century.

The strength of the Unitarian faith lies in the very first position which it seized, and which I hold to be the impregnable centre of all true religious and moral theory, — that for all spiritual natures *Unity* and *Personality* are One. That which distinguishes you from another, and holds you to your identity from day to day, is the permanent Self-consciousness which the stream of varying thoughts touches as it flows, and the continuous Will which issues or permits the most opposite activities. These are the highest and characteristic attributes of our being; and by its highest attributes must every nature be measured, and in them must its essence be found. Suppose them to change. Let a fever obliterate your memory of the past, or establish within you a double and alternate consciousness, unrelated as your dreaming to your day; and we could no more call to account this fluctuating self than we could punish John for Peter's lie. The moral identity once broken, all other continuity goes for nothing, all other sameness is illusory. What boots it that you are still as tall, as strong, as swift as you were before; that your friends recognize your photograph and your voice; that your pulse has not altered its speed, nor your brain its size? Your being has fallen into fragments which these threads are ineffectual to blend. This rule of thought is our only guide when we pass to things divine; and it compels us to say that if God be not One *Person*, he is not One at all. Whatever else remains, when you have multiplied the *personal* centres of thought and will, is lower than these, and any unity it may have is of no interest to us, for whom *nothing impersonal can ever be Divine*. The Godhead, if by that you mean the Supreme Object of our worship and our trust, subsists not in any spiritual substance within whose compass separate per-

sonalities may have their presence and unfold their celestial drama, but in the living seats of Infinite Mind and Perfect Holiness. A plurality of these is a plurality of gods; and if you try to integrate them again by a common relation to some impersonal essence, you do but deify the lower after taking away the unity from the higher.

I know it will be said that the old creeds meant something less by the word "person" than it suggests to us, and intended only to mark three distinct parts which the divine nature plays relatively to the universe and to us. However true the explanation, it leaves the thing explained worse than it was before; for if the personal attributes, as we understand them, are absent from the members of the triad, where are they to be found? *Who* thinks the divine thoughts? *Who* wills the divine acts? Whither am I to fly for the Living Mind that answers to my own, Spirit to spirit? If these characteristics are disclaimed for the *personal* elements of the scheme, it is surely vain to seek them in the *non*-personal; and they must simply be without determinate place in it *anywhere*, and float unfixed in the spaces of the Divine Infinitude. And this is the simple truth: the language of the creeds is born of an ancient pantheistic philosophy, which blurred all the lines between Thinker and Thought, between God and the World, between Spontaneity and Will, and never gained the complete conception of *Personality*, human or divine. This great and prolific idea, approached but not secured by Judaism, is the healthy product of modern times, the chief gain of our speculative intellect, and inspirer of our practical life; and a religion which does not provide for it, which instead of borrowing anything from its light and power only blinks at them and eludes them, and escapes under cover of the Greek ambrosial cloud, half radiance, half mist, confesses itself unequal to the wants of living humanity. The first essential, then, of a restored purity

of worship was precisely the work to which our predecessors in the last century addressed themselves, — to clear the personality of God till it is simple as the unity of the soul; to sweep away the haze of ancient pantheism, with the ecclesiastical mythology it holds; to take the eternal Son of God from heaven, and isolate the Father as the one Infinite Mind, the sole self-subsisting Life, the all-pervading Will, at whose disposal creation lies.

The first effect of this absolute loneliness of God inevitably was to exhibit the universe as a stupendous centralized monarchy, administered on one plan, and directed by one power. The provinces of the cosmos can thus have, as it were, no municipal life, the local agents no real independence; the whole hierarchy of place and rank is but the receptacle and organ of a force given and transmitted. There can be no pause for remonstrance, no idea of resistance; the single impulse from the capital moves on its inexorable lines, and executes its errand at every station as it flies. Priestley's Necessarian type of doctrine was the natural result of his reduction of all causes to One, and his intense absorption in that One. When you plant yourself in thought at the divine station, and look out thence through the universal fields, and take the clew now of this law, now of that, to conduct you through the maze of phenomena, the whole system, reduced to a miniature at that height, must appear as one, with man as a minor organism swept along in its current of force; its scientific programme will construct itself within your imagination, filling up its vacancies as the prospect clears, till the whole appears to you as a mighty machine of divine invention, the vehicle of predetermined methods, and the depository of predetermined ends. So long as the unity of the divine agency was in question, and was threatened with the partnership of co-equal powers, this religion of causation, which indignantly expelled all "fel-

low-workers" and all withstanders of the Most High, met the wants of the time, and fostered a sublime and comprehensive piety. You pass through an experience at once subduing and exalting when you part from all realities but the Supreme, and find yourself with him alone; when the throng of secondary causes ceases to distract and to conflict, and as it sinks into semblance drops into the lines of an eternal order; when you try to empty the running waters and the sweeping winds and the teeming earth of any forces of their own, and bid them speak and look for him alone; when the passions of men rise up against you, and you stand still and answer not, because they subside before your eye into a pulsation of his will; when the very thoughts you seem to think resolve themselves before you into phenomena of his life passing a conscious point of space; when, in short, life becomes to you a sacred dream, and history a soliloquy of God, and the possibility is gone of anything less than the Divine. As if to test at once the sustaining efficacy of this faith, its great apostle in the last century was driven, the victim of ruinous outrage, from the country he had instructed and adorned; and never did they receive more impressive comment than in the lofty patience, the serene trust, the unexhausted benevolence of the exile of Pennsylvania.

In vindicating the sovereignty of the universal Father, this scheme subordinates the whole universe alike, and allows nothing to approach nearer to him than the web to him that weaves it. The threads may be of this color or of that in the warp or in the woof; but all are interwoven in the same texture, and hold a homogeneous relation to the Maker. Man, therefore, is not less exclusively a part of Nature than the birds and the plants, is worked up in the same way into the organism of the world, and though he may have a larger consciousness, containing within itself more successive links in the chain of production,

is equally the theatre of their predetermined order, and powerless to give them an alternative direction. He too, like all else, is as the clay to the potter, to be moulded by another; and be the pressure on the inside or on the out, he is shaped, and does not shape himself. Since he is sensitive, and can be turned hither and thither by the touch of pleasure and of pain, he is *manageable*, and may be broken in; but since he cannot help going whither the given impulses take him, he is not *responsible*. The treatment of him may be *disciplinary*, but cannot be *moral;* you may pity him, but cannot blame him; and he may feel regret, but never compunction. If this is his aspect in the human view, still more must it be in the Divine. How can God, who meant him to be exactly what he is, call him to account, or look on him with less complacency than if he had been different? And so the moral sentiments which are superseded on earth disappear from heaven, and he whose name was once "Righteous" and "Holy" merges all his perfections in "benevolence." Nor does there seem room upon this scheme for any *personal* relations between us and God, whether of *similitude* or of *communion*. For that which constitutes him a *personal* being is precisely that free, originating power of which we have none, and which, centred all in his nature, leaves him the only *person* in the universe, and us but a complicated sort of *things*. In the only attribute which gives him *character*, we can never be like him; and we have no independent standing-place from which we may speak with him face to face, no private closet where we can enter and shut the door. If we kneel down, it is on his prompting-ground; if we sigh, it is his breathing; if we pray, the words move the wrong way, and flow from him, not to him. He possesses us behind and before; and turn and look and implore and weep as we may, it is still his own drama under masquerade. From this theory, it is plain,

the "eternal decrees" have not yet taken their departure. By the touch of benevolence they have lost, indeed, their *cruelty*, but not their *absoluteness;* and something else is needed ere we meet the presence of him to whom arose the night cry of Gethsemane.

The reaction naturally came from the other end of the relation between us and God. As in the *religion of causation* man seemed to be crushed into a mere creature, so was it on his behalf that remonstrance broke forth, and at the bidding of Channing the *religion of conscience* sprang to its feet. However fascinating the precision and simplicity of the Necessarian theory in its advance through the fields of physical and biological law, it meets with vehement resistance in its attempt to annex human nature, and put it under the same code with the tides and trees and reptiles. Our personality, though frightened and dwindled for a moment, and hardly believing its own voice, is sure to recover from the most ingenious philosophy, and to reassert its power over the alternatives before it, and own its obligation to the authority within it; and the second period of our theology is marked by this recovered sense of moral freedom. When the tones of the New England prophet reached us here, why did they so stir our hearts? They brought a new language; they burst into a forgotten chamber of the soul; they recalled natural faiths which had been explained away, and boldly appealed to feelings which had been struck down; they touched the springs of a sleeping enthusiasm, and carried us forward from the outer temple of devout science to the inner shrine of self-denying duty. The very inspiration of the new gospel, in what thought does it lie? *The greatness of human capacity*, not so much for intellectual training as for voluntary righteousness, for victory over temptation, for resemblance to God, — a greatness attested on the terrible side by the power to incur *guilt*, to choose

ruin, to resist the Supreme Will. The interval between our lowest possible sin and our highest possible holiness is infinite, and can be expressed by no physical contrast of hell and heaven; and that interval measures the range of our power and the solemnity of our trust. Of this vast scale of possibility we have notice given to us in the aspirations and the remorse of conscience, — whence we well know that our sins are more than mistakes, and our self-conquests more than prudence; that both are our own, and we are shaped into neither; that by the one we sink into mere Nature, by the other we rise toward God. Thus regarded, moral distinctions, no longer resolved into mere sentient ones, are reinstated in their independent reality, and the apprehension of them becomes the supreme dignity of all minds. There is one and the same righteousness for the whole hierarchy of spiritual natures, and the free love of it and life in it is the bond of their glorious commonwealth. Here it is that man is truly "the *image* of God," and not his moulded *creature* merely. In proportion as he attains goodness, purity, disinterested love, and strength to negative the wrong, does he really reflect the divine lineaments in little, and enter upon an actual sympathy with the Holiest of all; and the essential perfection of the Parent Mind repeats itself in the child, and kindles his features with a lustre of the heavens. Under the light of this faith the history of mankind is no longer a mere branch of the physical development of the world, the last chapter in the natural history of species, but broadly distinguishes itself from these, and appears on a different stage as a drama of real probation, whose great criminals, tyrants, and impostors we are not bound to pity like the sufferers of loathsome disease in an infirmary, but may abhor and denounce as enemies rather than victims of God, and whose heroes and saints we may regard as something more than animated figures handsomely constituted

and finely tempered for their work, and visit with our natural praise and reverence as faithful representatives in time of the eternal justice and purity. If you gaze down upon the human race from the causal throne of the universe, they are flung into insignificance, and float as gleaming dust upon the air-current; but if from the interior of the human spirit you look up to the heaven of God, you find a possible divineness in man and an affinity with the Original Perfection which dissipates the illusion of his littleness. Will, then, this sense of moral freedom, of the reality and greatness of our trust, turn us into Stoics, and set us up in self-gratulation and pride? We are told that so it must be if we as free persons stand face to face with the personal unity of the Father who constitutes us his children, and that we can have no humility unless there be an eternal Son of God in heaven to graft that grace upon us as a portion of his own.[1] If we ask for a reason for this strange dictum, we are only told that it is impossible for a finite personality to be humble out of its own resources and reflections: the feeling must be divinely given. Who, then, is it that is said to make us partners in this lowly grace? The eternal and spotless Son of God! Is, then, humility possible in an Infinite Personality, in one who stands only in presence of equal or of lower beings, and in whom failure has never been and progress never can be, yet *not* possible to us in our finite strife and imperfection, who are forever haunted by the ideal which we do not reach, who see an indefinite hierarchy of excellence above us, and who in all our shortcomings have day by day to spread our moral record before the Holiest of all? Surely, if there be a position and a mind in this universe shut up within the tenderest shadows of humility, it is ours; and if it be true, as our critic affirms, that we

[1] Tracts for Priests and People, No. XIV., "The Incarnation," by Richard H. Hutton, A.M., pp. 27–30.

Unitarians feel not these shadows, but lift a self-righteous head, may God give us better knowledge where we stand!

If now we put together the two types of doctrine which I have described, and make them into one so far as they are compatible, shall we find rest in a complete and adequate theology? Let us say from the first that God is sole cause in the natural world, and from the second that he is sole cause except ourselves in the moral world, where we are permitted to be "fellow-workers" with him; is this a finished account of his relation to us? No. All this might be true; he might pervade all Nature with his presence and his providence; he might invest our spirit with a share of his free will; and might then withdraw from our voluntary life, and leave us to work out our moral problem alone, and only in the end return to take account of our fidelity. In this case each soul would be as a spiritual island planted out in the natural deep of things, beaten by the tides of law that sweep around, but with autocratic power to turn their destructive force aside, and make them serve its affluence and beauty. We should thus sustain real responsible relations to the heavenly Father, — relations which he has planted us out to assume, and which he will recall us to sum up; but meanwhile we shall remain personally apart, and live as sons in a foreign land, executing the sacred trust they have brought from home. Is, then, our spiritual nature thus rounded off into self-sufficient isolation; and is it across a chasm without a bridge that we look to him, and feel after him in vain to find him? When we too are on the eve of our cross-bearing, and take up the words, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me," is it only of a *physical presence* that we speak, and must we faint and struggle on through the silence of our God? Many a path of life such moral desolation would turn into a dolorous way; nor could

there well be a more pathetic lot than to believe in a Father of our spirits, and to think him out of reach. But what is to fasten upon us so miserable a dream? Is it the nightmare of law that sits upon our breast, and turns our cry for Him into a helpless shriek? We have but to open our eyes, and the ghost is gone, and we draw breath in the sweet morning light. Law reigns inflexibly through the natural life, and if that were all, would reign inflexibly everywhere. But there is in us that which is above the natural life, and apprehends what lies beyond it; and just as God is not imprisoned in the universe, but transcends it, and in that outlying realm is hindered by no pledge from acting freely out of fresh affections, so have we a range of free ideal life, whence we can look down upon the instincts of nature and up to the Infinite Holiness, and which we know is in subjection to nothing inflexible. This is precisely what we mean by *spirit,* — this liberty to move alternatively out of the thought and love of a reasonable mind. God is a spirit, in so far as he is not locked up in the invariable order of the world; and there is a spirit in man, in so far as he is not disposed of by his organism and his dwelling-place, but rises in thought and directs himself in affection to what is above them. Here, then, it is that there is room for true communion, that Spirit may meet spirit, and that the sacred silence may itself speak the exchange of love. Our moral ideals, the irrepressible sigh after higher perfection, the sense of divine authority in every vision of the better, the shame at every yielding to the worse, — these, we are well aware, are not of our making, or donations of other men. They are *above us;* they are *given to us;* they are what draw us to God, and commence our likeness to him. In this field of spiritual affection that lies around our will, the common essence of man and God, the divine element that spreads its margin into us, has its home, its life, its reciprocal

recognition, its bursts of human prayer, its answer of divine compassion, its deep shadows of contrition, and returning gleams of restoration. The life with God, then, of which saintly men in every age have testified, is no illusion of enthusiasm, but an ascent through simple surrender to the higher region of the soul, the very watch-tower whence there is the clearest and the largest view. The bridge is thus complete between the divine and the human personality; and we crown the religion of *causation* and the religion of *conscience* by the religion of the *spirit*. If we, in our poverty of thought, have had to take them up successively, all of them together have the authority of him "in whom all fulness dwells," and can never be wanting in us except as we fail of "the full stature of Christ." We know with what meaning the lily of the field looked up into his eye; and if the robe of beauty on the earth was to him no dead product of the seasonal machine, but woven by the living hand of God, he sanctioned the piety which resolved the creative agencies back into the Creator's. We know with what strong crying and tears he could expostulate with heaven, and wrestle, as it were will with will, in the hour of temptation and of agony, yet as a son learn obedience through that which he suffered, and end with the calm words, "Not my will, but Thine, be done;" and alike in the strife and in the surrender we have his witness to the reality of that moral conflict in which sin is always possible, and filial self-sacrifice is the only victory. We know how he fed the secret springs of his gentle and holy life, and sought upon the hills and in the night for the loneliest confidences with the Hearer of Prayer, and with mingling confines of personality felt himself in the Father and the Father in him and his; and we must own in him the supreme witness to the spiritual union of man with God, — a union which, were it constant as in him, might be deemed an incarnation, but where transient

and intermittent, as with our lower fidelity, appears rather as a dispensation of the Spirit.

Thus, then, the Unitarian protest, which perhaps begun with too great and monarchical a separation of our world from heaven, comes round at last to a reunion of the human and divine. And in the cycle which it has run there is a curious recovery, as it were, of the functions of Trinity without its paradoxes, only with the drama transferred from the individuality of Christ to the life of humanity. We have traversed, and at length united, the relations of *creature to the Creator*, of *Son to Father*, of *weak and tempted to the all-quickening Spirit;* and may we not say that thus, without confusing the nature of God, we have enriched and ennobled our religious comprehension of man, and provided for a more balanced justice to the claims of Nature, of conscience, and of the soul, and a blending consecration for them all? If an expanding faith brings us, as we think, an ampler peace, let it stir us also to a deeper fidelity; and if those who know us not still drive us from the sacred enclosure, and treat us as wanderers from the Christendom we love, all the more let us fling ourselves into the embrace of the Only True, and still say, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

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[No. 90]

THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF GOD

BY

Rev. MINOT J. SAVAGE, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
BOSTON

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UNITARIANISM:

The Modern Conception of God.

BY REV. MINOT J. SAVAGE, D.D.

Were it not for the unfortunate fact that the world has been accustomed to assume the existence of infallible revelations at different stages of its career, we might reasonably look for quiet and natural growth in the sphere of theology, as well as in other departments of human thought and life. But as these infallibilities have been assumed, and as men have been constantly threatened with infinite pains and penalties for disbelieving them, the advances which theology has actually made have been achieved through pain and struggle, and no end of incidental loss.

There is always a serious danger in the overthrow of an established religious belief. This, for the reason that people have been taught and trained to hold that the reality itself was inextricably bound up with, almost identified with, the thought-form, which has merely been its temporary clothing and expression. It is therefore true to-day that, as the result of the working of this principle, thousands of persons are practically "without God and without hope in the world."

The old conception of an *extra-mundane* being, living in a definite place called heaven, arbitrarily ruling the world, as a despot rules his empire,— this thought has hopelessly passed away from the minds of those people who know how, and who dare, to think. And, as they have been taught that this is the God of the Bible, of an infallible revelation, and that, if this be not true, there is no sufficient reason for believing in God at all, it is not, perhaps, so very strange if the teachers have been taken at their word; and many have come to feel that the position of the agnostic is the only rational one.

It is those who are in this state of mind who, whether they are conscious of desiring it or not, really need help. There is no use in trying to help them by assumptions. They are tired of that method. Let us see, then, what we can find by assuming nothing, by starting with universally accepted facts, and taking no single step which these facts do not clearly justify.

When man first wakes up to consciousness of himself as an individual, that consciousness implies the existence of not himself merely, but of a power, being,— no matter what name is used,— which is not himself. In speaking of this other power or being, we will not as yet use the personal pronoun *He*, but rather *It*, so as to avoid assuming anything which, at this stage of our investigation, we do not know. But, as the individual observes and studies, he recognizes the fact that this which is not himself was here before he was born, and will be here after he has passed away. It is the power which is manifested in the universe all about us. We recognize the fact that it is this power which has given us life.

Whether, then, we be theists or agnostics or atheists or materialists, it matters not at present for the purpose of our argument. This power has given us life and is therefore, whatever more it may be, our Father. Out of it have come, not only our bodies, but our minds, our affectional natures, our consciousness, whatever we mean when we think of ourselves as souls. This power has produced not only the beasts of the field, not only the lowest types of humanity, but brains like that of Shakespeare and spiritual natures like that of Jesus.

This being is not merely the sum total of the physical facts and forces which we see and touch. Herbert Spencer has told us that the existence of an invisible and eternal power back of all phenomena, and of which phenomena are only the changing and passing manifestations, is the most certain of all our items of knowledge.

In the next place, we are compelled to think of this power as omnipotent. The manifestations of its might overwhelm us at every turn. To it we can conceive no limits. If we estimate the forces shut up in a drop of water, and then go on to calculate the inconceivable power which holds the

moon in its position as a satellite of the earth, and then try to multiply these by the systems and galaxies which make up what we call the universe, it cannot seem an exaggeration to us to call this power omnipotent.

Not only is this Being omnipotent, it is eternal. We cannot dream of a beginning or an end.

In the next place, we have come to know that this power is one. We have demonstrated beyond all question that we are inhabitants of a *universe.*

Once more, we are compelled to think of this power as intelligent. Whether with our telescopes we invade the heavens around us or with our microscopes peer down into infinite deeps beneath, we find everywhere perfect and universal order. It is an intelligible order; and so we are compelled to think of the power of which it is an expression as an intelligent power.

Now comes the further and far more important question as to whether we are at liberty to think of this Being as personal. This will depend upon what our definition of the word may be. It is not personal in the sense in which we use that word of ourselves, meaning limited, outlined, enclosed in a body; but a little careful thought will reveal the fact that the centre and essence of personality is consciousness, the ability to think or say "I." In this sense, if we may not confidently declare that this power is personal, we are certain of at least one thing. It is, if not personal, inconceivably more than what we are accustomed to cover by that term. Personality is a product of this power; and, since nothing is evolved which was not first involved, and no stream can rise higher than its source, that of which personality is a product must be at least as much as that which is produced.

And here consider a luminous sentence of Herbert Spencer's. This he said to me years ago, and before it was ever published: "There is nothing unreasonable in our supposing that the infinite and eternal power may be as much above and beyond what we mean by the terms 'personality' and 'consciousness' as we are above and beyond vegetable growths." This power, then, is not something less than personality, but perhaps something unspeakably more.

But the one thing on which we must insist almost more than on any other, if we are to believe in God, is that we

may be allowed to think of him as *good*. In the face of the pain and evil of the world, is this possible? Let us think for a moment. The necessary pain of the world — that is, that which we do not needlessly bring upon the lower orders of life and upon each other — may easily be seen to be a sign of beneficence, not of malignancy or even carelessness. If a race of beings were placed in this world, incapable of feeling pain, they could not continue in existence for six months. It is only the sense of pain and the avoidance of those things which cause pain which protect us constantly from imminent destruction. In the next place, we cannot conceive the existence of pleasure without the existence also of pain. It is only through the consciousness of both that we can know the existence of either.

As to moral evil, in the light of evolution, our problem is turned completely around. It is not the origin of evil any longer which we are to explain: it is the origin of goodness. With the coming of man upon the earth, human love and conscience are born; and out of these come growth and the possibility of moral progress. It is beyond the possibility of mere omnipotence to create at once a perfectly virtuous being; for what we mean by virtue is the recognition of its opposite, the struggle against it and the victory over it. The word itself has no significance in any other sense. If there are to be moral beings, then there must be evil and growth through contact with it. The existence of evil, then, is no necessary objection to a perfect trust in the goodness of God.

One other consideration may be briefly touched upon. We know, beyond all question, that the universe is on the side of goodness. In the nature of things it must be in favor of keeping its own laws; and the keeping of its laws is what we mean by right, or righteousness. And then, again, this consideration is further strengthened by the observed fact that the sum of good has been increasing from the dawn of human life on earth. It is the majority power, and is coming more and more into control. This alone is scientific demonstration that the universe is on its side. Were not good in the majority, such a thing as human society could not exist. For what we mean by evil is those tendencies and forces which disintegrate and tear down, while good

is those tendencies and forces which bind together and build up.

The simple fact, then, that human society exists, and is growing at least a little better, century by century, is absolute proof that good is in the majority.

In view of the foregoing considerations, it seems to me that we are now justified in the use of the word God, and in speaking of this God as "He,"—our Father. May we now be permitted to believe that he takes notice of us individually, and that we, small and insignificant as we seem to ourselves, are the objects of his care? To use an illustration, we know that the greatest general is he who not only conceives and carries out his great plans, but he who has the most complete knowledge of those details on which the success of his plans depends. It is said that Napoleon knew more about the details of the different departments of his army than did those subordinate officers who had immediate charge of them.

As we study the microscopic universe, we find that power which swings the planets and suns in their orbits, equally regards the perfect order of the inconceivably small. The only objection that we can frame against God's loving care over the least of us all is our difficulty in grasping such a conception. It is a necessary inference from the thought of the kind of Being which we have been attempting to outline.

May we pray to this Being? We must suppose that between ourselves and him there is much closer affinity than between him and the highest of his creations which do not think or feel. We are souls, children of the infinite Soul; and so between us we may expect there should be the closest and tenderest bonds of sympathy.

We sometimes find it difficult to believe in God, because the thought of such a Being overwhelms us with a sense of mystery. But, if we open our eyes and think a little clearly, we shall find that the mystery is not confined to God. We know that we ourselves exist, and yet each one of us is as unfathomable a mystery as God himself. Let me suggest what I mean by an illustration. I am well aware that the illustration can only hint afar off the greatness of the thought, but it may help us to a more rational conception of that which it is confessedly so difficult to comprehend.

Each one of us, for example, is as profound a mystery as is God; and there are certain parallelisms which are very striking and suggestive. For example, to put it in the most concrete fashion, I am myself as invisible, as intangible, as is God. Throughout the limits of my body I am in a sense omnipresent, as we may think of God as being, as related to the universe. Nobody, not even my most intimate friend, has ever seen me or touched me, or ever will. My body is visible and tangible, but *I* am not my body: I *use* my body. And, when you attempt to locate me, you cannot say that I am in my hand or my foot or my brain. I am all, for any practical purpose, in that part of my body which is in conscious and definite activity at any particular moment. I am in my hand in the warm grasp of friendship, I am in my eye when I look out upon some entrancing scene, I am listening at the gateways of the ear when hearing the voice of a friend, I am at the tip of my tongue, forming the voiceless air into words, when I speak; in short, I am all wherever I am called for by the exigencies of the occasion.

So it seems to me that we may think of God in the infinitesimal world beneath us, in the smallest grass-blade at our feet, in the brain of Shakespeare, the heart of Jesus, in the light of the stars over our heads,— wherever there is life or power or beauty or joy, wherever there is suffering or struggle, defeat or victory, there is God. The old thought of God has absolutely passed away; but God himself, by the great changes in thought and theory which are passing over the world, is only brought unspeakably nearer to us. He is not in heaven only: he is close by our sides. He is nearer than the breath we breathe or the beating of our hearts. As Tennyson phrases it,—

> Speak to Him, thou, for he hears,
> And spirit with spirit may meet.
> Closer is he than breathing,
> And nearer than hands and feet.

Let us not, then, hesitate to accept the light of the new revelation which shines out of God's heaven to-day, but fearlessly follow his leading, knowing that thus we must come ever nearer and nearer to himself.

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[No. 91.]

THE UNITARIANS.

BY

REV. EDWARD EVERETT HALE, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

BOSTON.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

THE UNITARIANS.*

The position of the Unitarian Church in America is, from the nature of the case, wholly different from that of any other communion. For the Unitarian Church brings together people who have agreed that they will not enforce any formal statement of religion. They do not understand that any intellectual formula is necessary to bring about that larger life which the Saviour called "the coming of the Kingdom of God." They trust implicitly and absolutely in that presence with us to-day of God himself, which all Christian communions assert in words. It follows that the greater part of the Unitarians of the country are connected with churches not in the Unitarian organization. They are comparatively indifferent as to what the minister says in his sermon, or as to what the creed of the particular organization affects.

The business of the Unitarian Church is to unite all children of God for the bringing in of His Kingdom. In this business they do not speak even of the saving of separate souls as the first necessity, though of course it follows immediately on loyal effort for the common good.

As persons of profound Unitarian convictions might be found in almost every religious assembly in America, it is impossible to make any statistical statement of their power in the religious life of America. All sermons which are

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Amended and brought up to date in 1905.

called practical, as distinct from dogmatic or doctrinal preaching, are Unitarian sermons. All sermons which impress what Scougal called "the life of God in the soul of man" are Unitarian sermons. All sermons which point out the way in which the Kingdom of God can be advanced in the world are Unitarian sermons. And this is so, whether they are preached from a Roman Catholic pulpit or are the unpremeditated utterances of a Quaker meeting.

But the object of this paper is to show what is now the visible work of the Unitarian denomination in America in different departments of ecclesiastical activity. I will not attempt, therefore, any guess as to the work done by Unitarian literature and the principles it expresses in churches called Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian. I will only say that that work is very large.

The great Unitarian leaders of the past century have been William Ellery Channing, James Martineau, and Theodore Parker. It is certain that, in the wide circulation of their books, many more copies are now read in the theological schools of Orthodox communions than in all the parsonages of all the Unitarian ministry.

When Dean Stanley went back from America to England, in 1881, he said that he had taken every opportunity to hear the best preaching of the American Evangelical churches of different communions, and that it made no difference whom he heard, for Mr. Emerson was always the preacher. Mr. Emerson, born in the Unitarian Church, and for several years in its active ministry, was all his life urging the Unitarian principle of the absolute immanence of God. It is this which makes him the great religious apostle of America to-day, whether the preacher be Dr. Swing, of Chicago, or Mr. Gordon, in New England, or any one between.

The organized Unitarian Church of America accepted that name some eighty years ago in New England. Historically, its visible organization dates from that period. It has been observed that Independency, whether in Hungary, in Switzerland, in England, in France, in Holland, or in America, has inevitably tended to freedom or Liberalism in religion. One cannot make much of such texts as "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," and at the same time keep people bound for generations to a written formula like the Athanasian Creed or the Westminster Confession.

In the case of New England, the Independency was from the first radical. At the very beginning, it was impossible for any separate church to agree on a creed for itself, and for a hundred years of "fierce democracy" they hardly attempted it. In the early Puritan churches men simply covenanted to "walk together" as followers of Christ, by whatever light might be revealed to them. Who or what Christ was, or how the light might come, they did not attempt to say on paper. They probably knew that no two of them would agree in the same statement.

The churches also gave to their laymen a much larger share in matters of conscience or religion than other churches had dared. So it happened that by a steady growth the strict Calvinism of the Puritan leaders often gave place to a very broad Arminian theology, which proclaimed, as the Methodist hymn says: —

> "Salvation 's free for you and me;
> I 'm glad salvation 's free!"

Predestination or foreordination was absolutely thrown over. Of course, all the five points of Calvin went in the same parcel with it. When in 1745 Whitfield, with his Calvinistic prejudices, started what is known as "the great

revival" in New England, a distinct protest, which was at the time called "Arminian," made it clear that a very large part of the people of New England, and of course of their churches, had rejected the Calvinistic theology.

In the second decade of this century, the Calvinistic preachers of Massachusetts tried again to state in form the stiff doctrines of the Westminster Confession. It was at this time that the Congregational churches of Massachusetts — never united in any strong organism — parted, and became two bodies, which have since found but few points for co-operation.

In Massachusetts we speak of the "Orthodox churches" and of the "Liberal churches" to designate those who retain Calvinistic creeds, and those which do not. In 1825 most of the leaders of the "Liberal" side formed the American Unitarian Association as a missionary body for the extension of "pure Christianity." But this was an association of individuals. The churches themselves, defiant in their Independency and very shy of anything which should savor of Presbyterian or Episcopal control, made no formal organization, until they were fairly compelled to it.

But at last, at the end of the civil war, in a convention which was sitting in New York on the very day when Grant entered Richmond, three hundred of the Unitarian churches formed "The National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian churches of America." They state the historical truth that they are impelled to this union by the great opportunities and demands for Christian work and consecration. But they have steadily refused to make any written formula which can be called a creed by which to define the opinions of the Churches united.

At the first meeting of this Conference it made a suggestion, which amounted to a direction, for the formation

of local conferences in different parts of the country. There now exist twenty-nine of these conferences.

Among these are the Unitarian Conference of the Middle States and Canada, the Western Conference, the Southern Conference, three Pacific Coast Conferences, ten local New England Conferences, such as the Connecticut Valley, the Channing, and the Worcester Conferences, and State Conferences in Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Wisconsin.

The largest of these Conferences maintain "missionary agents," to whom is entrusted the work which in Episcopal bodies would be given to Missionary Bishops. But that name is not used in any of the Unitarian communions, excepting in the Hungarian Church.

Until within some thirty years the principal duty of the American Unitarian Association, which has been accepted by the National Conference as its executive agent, was the publication of Unitarian books. The present generation of Americans, fortunately, does not know how severe was the censorship which ecclesiastical orthodoxy then kept upon the press of America. Publishers were afraid to be responsible for books which were called radical. Thus Miss Edgeworth's "Sequel to Frank" was first published by the Unitarian Book Fund, because no American publisher chose to take the risk of publishing any book from a writer so unevangelical. It was the chief business, therefore, of the Unitarian Association, for the first forty years of its existence, to print books which would not be printed otherwise.

All this is now changed. The more radical a book is, the better for the "trade." The Unitarian Association now publishes occasional tracts on "Pure Christianity," for the use of its missionaries; but for the most part, it leaves the publication of books, whether of criticism,

of instruction, or of edification, to the regular business houses engaged in publishing.

What follows is that books discussing religious and ecclesiastical subjects with absolute freedom go everywhere into quarters where they could never be pushed, even with the proselyting zeal of a denominational board. It has been the policy of the Evangelical pulpit, in more instances than worldly wisdom would have suggested, to warn its hearers not to be tempted by the alluring baits offered them in heterodox writings. This word of warning is a very wide advertisement of such literature. And it has often proved that in cities or towns where the heterodox people had not united in any church order — under dread, indeed, of the restrictions imposed by any ecclesiastical forms, however slight — the demand, through the booksellers, of latitudinarian literature has been larger than that of cities where such a demand was supplied, to a certain extent, by the proclamation made, at least once a week, by a free pulpit.

Nevertheless the Association has displayed increased activity in the work of publication, while devoting itself more widely than formerly to the establishment of new churches in different parts of the United States. So small is the Unitarian Church as an organized communion, that the number of new churches seems insignificant almost, in comparison, for instance, with the enlargement of the number of Methodist churches, which is said to be two a day.

The Unitarian Association is able, however, to establish new churches quite as fast as it finds competent ministers. The Unitarian body has always been very critical in its judgment of its ministry, and probably always will be. Its pulpit is replenished by graduates from its divinity schools, and from other denominations whose ministers seek the independence and freedom of the Unitarian pulpit.

Perhaps one-half of these come to it from its own churches or theological schools; one-half, perhaps, from the Evangelical pulpits. Gentlemen who find the restrictions of old creeds irksome, discover — to their surprise, perhaps — that close at their side is a respectable Church which asks for no formula from any preacher. It simply gives him an honorable chance to work in bringing in the Kingdom of God. Once engaged in that work, he is judged — as everything else is judged — by his fruits.

It will surprise some readers in the Evangelical communion when I say it, but it is true, that I do not know the opinions on many interesting points of Christian theology of gentlemen with whom I have been closely associated in a Unitarian ministry of forty years. I have no occasion to know. I see how far they succeed in their Christian work and how far they fail. But, unless we meet personally for conversation, or unless I hear their preaching, which does not often happen, I cannot judge of their dogmatic opinion from the fact that they occupy a Unitarian pulpit.

Of thirty-five new Unitarian churches recently established, five are in the Pacific States, ten are in New England, two in the Dominion of Canada, and the rest in the Middle and Northern States, with one in the South. They are generally formed by the coming together of intelligent religious persons, in some large town, who from early education or from a recent change of conviction cannot bear the restrictions, whether of ritual or of doctrine, of the creed-bound Churches.

To these persons it has sometimes happened that people of no religion have joined themselves, from curiosity, or from the desire to annoy or injure "the old line." But the Unitarian Church is not, in its nature, controversial or aggressive. It would have enlarged more visibly, had

not its ministers, on the whole, hated controversy. Their business, as has been said, is to bring in the Kingdom of God, and to bring it in by uniting men as far as they can.

As I read the history, their name was given them from their love of union, as long ago as the middle of the sixteenth century. As the Unitarian Church makes great account of character, having, indeed, no other visible test of its members, and being obliged to judge them by their fruits, as there is nothing else to judge them by, persons of loose or profligate life have no reason for joining it and no temptation to remain in it after they have joined.

It will often happen, therefore, that the only formula by which a Unitarian church can be described is that which the poet Rogers, who was himself an eager Unitarian, gave to his Church: "It believes," he said, "in one God, no devil, and twenty shillings to the pound."

The Unitarian Church of America, at an annual expense of $4,000, maintains a Unitarian Mission in Japan.

As in all other Churches, the people interested in the Unitarian Church to-day feel the necessity of making it a working Church. "The church is not to be a mere lecture-room." This is said everywhere in one form or another. The statement is very widely made in the constitutions of different congregations that they are organized "for worship, for education, for hospitality, and for charity." And many of the churches have committees and officers annually designated for each of these affairs. They seek to relieve the Church of Christ from the charge often made against it, that in its eagerness to save souls and to worship God, it has no organization for humanity.

To carry forward the business of education, the Unitarian Church, like all the other Churches, relies largely on its Sunday-schools. To provide for the general needs, it has a central Sunday-school Society, of which the office is in

25 Beacon Street, Boston, in the same building with the Boston offices of the Unitarian Association. This society publishes most of the text-books used in the Sunday-schools, imports and keeps for sale maps, prints, and other articles of Sunday-school equipment, and publishes a journal for Sunday-schools called *Every Other Sunday.*

The American Unitarian Association was made a delegate body in 1885, and since that time has consisted not merely of its Life Members, but of the ministers and delegates of all societies which contribute to its funds. Its more active church extension work practically dates from this period of reorganization. It holds for the maintenance of its missionary work an endowment in excess of $1,000,000. In addition to the income from this fund, it has annual contributions from many societies so as to be able to expend, for all purposes during the year, about $100,000.

The women of the denomination effected, in 1890, a permanent organization known as the National Alliance of Unitarian and Other Christian Women. This organization, in 1904, included 332 separate alliances, containing 14,338 members. It raises large sums of money for missionary and charitable purposes, working in co-operation with the American Unitarian Association.

In 1896, the young people of the denomination were organized into the Young People's Religious Union. In 1905, this body comprised 143 Unions, the objects of which are to foster religious life and public service.

The Unitarians are very coy, or shy, in establishing what would be called denominational schools. In certain instances, however, they have established boarding-schools, with special reference to the education of their own children, providing that there shall be no denominational pressure brought to bear upon the pupil. Such schools are the Hackley School at Tarrytown-on-the

Hudson, New York; Powder Point School, Duxbury, Mass.; Proctor Academy, Andover, N. H., for boys; and for girls, the Home School for Girls, West Newton, Mass.; Howard Seminary, West Bridgewater, Mass.; the McDuffie School for Girls, Springfield, Mass.; and the Prospect Hill School for Girls, Greenfield, Mass.

For the training of their ministers they depend in part upon the Divinity School of Harvard University, at Cambridge. This undenominational school is so well equipped, and so broad in its arrangements, that it draws in many pupils intending to work in the Evangelical ministry. It has eleven professors, drawn from several denominations.

This school has the immense advantage, not properly understood through the country, that any one of its students may attend any one of the courses of instruction carried on in Harvard University.

The Unitarian Theological School at Meadville, in Pennsylvania, is respectably endowed, with eight resident professors, and several others who lecture from time to time. In theory, this school was to provide preachers for what was "the West" in the days when it was founded. In practice, it has often proved that the gentlemen educated there determined to follow their career on the eastern coast of America or in England; and what was more, that the congregations in those parts liked to hear them and called them.

On the other hand, and not unnaturally, gentlemen who have been trained in the "cloister life" of an Eastern college have been glad to go West and enjoy the luxury of a new-born civilization. Such men are Dr. Stebbins, of San Francisco, and Dr. Thomas Eliot, of Oregon. Yet, again, some of the most efficient preachers in the Unitarian Church were educated in "the larger college of the world," and never had the advantages or disadvantages of a systematic professional school. Such men

have been Dr. William Ellery Channing, Edward Everett, George Bancroft, the late William P. Tilden, and Robert Collyer, of New York.

Another Unitarian theological school has recently been established in connection with the State University of California, at Berkeley.

Among the methods of education adopted by the Unitarian Church is an interesting use of modern methods, which is called the "Post-office Mission." In almost every large church there is a club of stay-at-home missionaries who do their work by mail. A club begins by taking a State for its own, say Minnesota or Idaho. In the newspapers of that State the club advertises that any person who is interested in Unitarian or other Liberal religious literature may address the secretary of the club, and will receive books, pamphlets, magazines, or newspapers in that line. It always proves that there is a large number of persons, perhaps in very small towns, who have heard of this heresy, but have not been able to obtain information upon it.

A well-organized club soon finds itself in correspondence with a large number of persons, perhaps several hundred, in the State which it has selected for its mission field. This correspondence often ripens into one of personal intimacy. It will happen that people write as they write to an old minister, or to a doctor who has been of service to them in other times. Out of such correspondences have come the volunteering of men of spirit for the ministry; also there has grown up the establishment of local libraries; and the post-office correspondence people often point to particular churches which have been founded as the evident result of their intelligent and energetic correspondence.

There is nothing known to me in the organization of the Unitarian Church in which the arrangements for the

hospitable welcome of strangers in a town are different from those of any other ecclesiastical body. It seems to us at the East that such enterprises are carried on with more cordiality and more skill in our Western cities than in our staid habits of an "effete civilization." But of this others may judge better than I can.

Under the general head of charity in the organization of the churches is included all "the organization of the church for humanity," if I may take the phrase of a distinguished Methodist clergyman. On this side the Unitarian Church ought to be at its best. For it exists simply for nothing but bringing in the Kingdom of God; and if it is not at work in that, it had better not be at all.

From the very beginning, therefore, its most active members have been more interested in what people call humanitarian work — by which is meant the general work of philanthropy — than they have been in enterprises involving ritual or ecclesiastical organization, or improvements in the methods of worship.

The Unitarian leaders were committed, through and through, with few exceptions, to the anti-slavery reform. It had no more effective coadjutors than Dr. Channing, Theodore Parker, and Samuel J. May. In the earlier days of the temperance reform in New England, it relied upon their co-operation; and the names of John Pierpont, Joseph Allen, and Moses Grant are among the earlier temperance apostles of Massachusetts.

In the larger cities its ministers and lay members have taken very active part in the efforts for the organization of charity which are known under the general name of the "Associated Charities." And they are undoubtedly much more apt to bring into their pulpit subjects relating immediately to the improvement of society than are the preachers in other communions.

In saying this I do not speak from the one-sided view of a Unitarian minister; I speak after examining, with a good deal of care, with reference to this subject, the monthly numbers of the *Homiletic Review*, a journal admirably conducted in the interests of preachers, and which would be apt to show impartially the subjects of which the better preachers of the United States are generally addressing their congregations. Whoever will examine this journal will see that in ninety-eight cases out of a hundred the subjects chosen for discourse on Sunday are not subjects relating to the immediate improvement of morals or of the social order.

It would be fair to say, on the other hand, that in the Unitarian pulpit nine-tenths of the sermons preached have immediate reference to the improvement of the condition of the people who are addressed. Indeed, it has been said satirically, the Unitarian Church deals with the kingdom of man, or with the Kingdom of God, more than it does with the saving of individual souls. This is probably a reproach which its leading preachers would accept, and on which they would be willing to join issue if there were any tribunal before which the right or wrong of such a course could be discussed.

This is what the Liberal Church of to-day, what the Liberal communions stand for, — "glad tidings," and not "sad tidings." Glad tidings; the absolute and real coming of the Kingdom of God. This is their paramount office. It is in practice in our communities, what "differences" them from other communions. That is to say, the first work of a Liberal church, in any community, is to bring that religion up to the standard of the Kingdom of God. And a Liberal church has no right to be, there is no sort of use in establishing it, unless in the very "hard-pan" of its foundations there is the determination of those who found it that it shall "level up" the place in which

it is, and bring it nearer to that standard of the Kingdom of God.

It has thus happened that the work of a genuine philanthropy, or what the Bible calls the bringing in of the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of the Son of Man, is attempted by the members of the Unitarian churches in lines wholly outside the specific work of their charity boards or of other strictly ecclesiastical organizations.

The present condition of the Unitarian Church, then, may be said to be that of a small body of people well satisfied that the religious convictions which they hold are those essential for the future life of this country. "A Unitarian church in any town means to you only one more name on your calendar," was the remark of an intelligent woman in a frontier town to a Unitarian missionary; "but to us it means more health, less sickness, more reading, less drinking, better music, higher society, and in general more life in this town than there was in it before."

That epigram of a bright woman states well enough what is the impression which the Unitarian leaders have with regard to the mission which they have in hand. That impression is not universal among the laity of their communion. Every Unitarian is, from the nature of the case, a free lance; and individuals are apt to spend their money and their zeal very much as they choose.

But the Unitarian Church undoubtedly regards itself as a sort of light corps, sent on in advance of the civilization of the world, to take the discomforts which always belong to heretics or fanatics, but to find, at the end of a generation, that the world has come up to the place where it was thirty years before, and to be on the lookout for new conquests.

It is impossible, as I have said, to print any creed and say that it represents the belief of all or of most Uni-

tarians. In a body numbering perhaps one hundred thousand people, and in some vital relation to other hundreds of thousands, every one of whom refuses to be bound by a formal confession, to make any such statement would be absurd. But in the statements which I have dropped by the way, as I have been trying to describe the position of this church, the intelligent reader will understand the drift of the movement in which the Unitarians are engaged.

It would be safe to say that no one of them regards Jesus Christ as the proper object of worship, in the modern use of that word. Unitarians worship God. They do not worship any son of God. They do not think that, in any fair use of words, the God of Heaven, the present Power who rules the universe to-day, walked from Capernaum to Jerusalem, or that, as Dr. Thompson says: "He walked about in Nazareth, interested in seeing the world which he had made." They regard all such language as belonging to a period before Galileo turned his tube upon the moons of Jupiter. Since it has been known that the earth is a mere speck in infinite space, they think it absurd to say that the Infinite Power, who rules all space, specialized himself in a house in Capernaum or in the temple at Jerusalem.

On the other hand, as I have said, all Unitarians belong to the Church of the Holy Spirit. They hold absolutely and practically that God is present with them, as He was present with Moses, as He was present with Isaiah, as He was present with Christ. They hold that He is as ready and as eager to lift this world up and to help His children in this world as he has been in any place or time. They believe that if they seek Him with all their hearts they will find Him. And the business of their worship is to bring people in accord in this claim for infinite power as the sons and daughters of the living God.

Thus they are at one with the best writers and thinkers of the Church in every line. We say that the Church has won all its victories when men have sought the life of God. We say that the life of God in the soul of man is the power by which this world is to be saved and set forward. We say that there is no good in Christianity unless in Christ a man's life is hid in God.

This is, for us, no expression of Sunday or of the creeds. It is the distinct consecration of all practical life. And we recognize a new discovery in railroad locomotion or a new method of electric lighting as belonging to the great series of gifts which a kind Father has bestowed upon children eager and willing to enter into His work and to subdue the world. We believe that the prime business of those children is to see that His will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

In such faith we believe that each son of God, or each daughter of God, has his or her own personal affair with this Infinite Power which makes for righteousness. We do not believe it possible for any substituted being to take the consequences of a man's sin, or to turn over to him any fixed quota of blessedness. Salvation with us is not salvation from any particular bit of punishment; it is the elevation of a son of God into the infinite life. He is saved from ignorance, from disease, from sin, and from their consequences. It is not so much that he is made happy, as that he is made blessed in an intercourse with the Infinite Power which is the life not only of this world but of the universe.

Of course, then, the general view of Unitarians with regard to heaven and hell is wholly different from that which I have a right to call the mythical view of the darkest ages. Probably no Unitarian would say that heaven was in one place and that hell was in another place. On the other hand, all Unitarians would say that in propor-

tion as a man sins, he suffers the consequences of sin; in proportion as he throws away sin, he enters into the life of a real son of God.

It may or may not be convenient or wise to give to the varying conditions which thus result the names of heaven and hell. Those happen to be the names which were given to them formerly; it may or may not be wise to continue those names. But whatever the name is, it is the wish of the Unitarian Church to establish the Kingdom of Heaven as a reality in this world. It seeks in practice that God's Kingdom may come, and that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Of course there are pessimists and low-toned people among Unitarians as there are among other people. But speaking by-and-large, again I should say that on the whole the Unitarian Church is pleased with its position. Unitarians think they are succeeding, and they expect to succeed further. The average sermon in Evangelical pulpits of to-day in America is much such a sermon as was the average sermon in the Unitarian pulpit fifty years ago. With some exceptions, it is fair to say that the Unitarian Church of to-day would not stand most of the sermons which satisfied the Unitarian ancestors of the same hearers fifty years ago.

Just the same thing may be said of any Orthodox church in America. We must make exceptions of such fanatics as Father Ignatius, or other revivalists, who make it their business to bring in the theology of the dark ages and display it, as at the opera a man comes upon the stage in plate-armor which might have been worn by Richard or by Philip Augustus.

But, on the whole, stiff Calvinism is now regarded as an absurdity in every pulpit in America. On the whole, the Church of America believes, as the great Methodist Church believes, —

"Salvation 's free;
It 's free for you and me."

On the whole the Church believes in character. On the whole the Church believes that every individual man has his own duty before God, and must approach God for himself. On the whole the Church does not believe in predestination or foreordination. If it rejects this, it has to reject the rest of the mediæval doctrines. So that, on the whole, the Unitarians feel that the protest of their fathers, and of the men who worked with their fathers, was by no means in vain.

Indeed, the constitutions of the United States and of the several States of America all rest on the presumption that men love the right and wish its advancement. That is to say, they rest on universal suffrage. Now no nation would trust its affairs to universal suffrage if it believed that men are the children of wrath, incapable of good, and led by the devil.

Again, all the American States insist on universal education. But if they believed that every one was born a child of wrath, they would not have placed the great advantages of intellectual education in their hands. That is to say, if we were surrounded by an army of devils, we should not place the best weapons at their disposal.

This is as much as to say that since the American people have been entrusted with the making of their own institutions, they have based those institutions on the postulate of the Unitarian Church, which is that all men and women are the children of God; that they may partake of the divine nature; and that, on the whole, their desire is to look upward and press forward.

[No. 92]

THE

FAITH OF CHARITY.

BY

CHARLES CARROLL EVERETT, D.D., LL.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE FAITH OF CHARITY.

CHARITY BELIEVETH ALL THINGS. — 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

THE chapter from which the text is taken contains the most complete and beautiful picture of the Christian life ever painted. It shows its central and ruling principle, which is charity, or love. It shows its humility, its patience, its simplicity; and then it shows its glory. Charity is the greatest and the most enduring of all things. The picture, indeed, is not that of the ideal of the world. This hoping all things, believing all things, enduring all things, is not in accordance with the faith or the practice of worldly wisdom. The ideal picture of the spirit of worldliness would be more after this style, "beareth little, believeth little, hopeth little." The world has rather a contempt for the soul that endures patiently. It is quick to perceive, or, at least to suspect and to resent an injury. It is high-strung, and not to be trifled with. Most of all does it hold in contempt this credulity which is a mark of charity, the one which I have singled out from the others as the subject of this discourse. "'Believeth all things!'—what simplicity, what a refreshing lack of worldly wisdom and experience; what a dupe such credulity must be; how it is imposed upon and played upon and cheated." Such is the verdict of the worldly spirit, which suspects all things, which is easily provoked, and thinketh all evil.

But, however foreign to the worldly ideal, the picture that Paul gives us is the Christian ideal. As one approaches this, one draws near to Christianity and to Christ. I am willing to compare the two and let them stand on their own merits. I am willing to take the characteristic of charity named in the text, the simplest and most unsophisticated of all. I am willing to take this credulity of charity and place it beside the incredulity of the world, and let it be seen which is the wiser, which is the more shrewd.

One man, we will suppose, is too ready of belief. He trusts too much in man, and, if it be possible, in God; the other trusts in nothing. Now of these two, the last is the greater dupe. He prides himself upon his shrewdness; "nobody shall impose upon him." He imposes upon himself. He is so sharp that he cheats the man whom he boasts that nobody can cheat, namely, himself. He is suspicious of everybody. He will trust in nobody. His business, I think, would shrink. A man doing a large business must have more or less confidence in the world. He must have confidence in those whom he employs, and in those with whom he deals. It must be a wise, not a random, confidence. He must not trust everybody. He must trust somebody. The man who does not, I think, would narrow his business. But this is of small account; I am very sure that he would narrow himself. There are some men who are suspicious of all the world. Every needy person they take for granted is an impostor; every prosperous man they think is a sharper; every unprosperous man is an imbecile. If they suffer from any one, it is intentional injury; if they are neglected, it is a proud scorn; if one does them a favor, it is for some selfish end. Now, so far as a man approaches this state, he cheats himself. He cheats himself out of the luxury of doing

good, out of the luxury of free and open-hearted intercourse with his fellowmen, out of all that makes life worth the living. Many, very many, extend this self-overreaching shrewdness into spiritual things. They will believe nothing that goes beyond their senses. They hug themselves in their self-gratulation at their own wisdom. They are so cunning that they cheat themselves out of their human birthright. They lower themselves, as nearly as possible, to the brute. They give up the blessed light of immortality, of God's present love and care. They shut themselves into outer darkness and boast of their wisdom, — "nobody can cheat them."

Charity believeth all things. A dupe, is it? I ask you which is the greater dupe, the charity that believes all things, or the selfishness that believes nothing? There are knaves in the world, there are superstitions in the world, there are deceivers and deceived; but one who lives as if these were all loses the good and invites the evil. Before the cold gaze of suspicion, hearts close themselves as the sensitive flower closes beneath the cloud. "What a bright, pleasant world it is," quoth the sun. "What a dark, cold world it is," answered the cloud. Men, to a large extent, make their own world, as the sun and the cloud make theirs. The over-suspicious man in the world is like a man who in a crowd keeps clapping his hand on his pocketbook to see if it is safe; he invites the pickpockets. Over-suspicion stimulates fraud; it invites neglect and injury. Over-suspicion in religion invites delusion, — either the delusion of superstition, which is often a repressed religious instinct claiming its rights, or the delusion of materialism.

Some persons are continually afraid of believing too much. They want to narrow their belief to the smallest point. Now, the more a man believes the better. I

would have, not the minimum, but the maximum of faith. I would have that charity which believes all things.

We hear much said in these days about positive faith. We do not want, it is said, negations on negations; we want a positive faith; the more positive and the more to be believed, the better. This is well. But let us ask, What is the large faith of charity? what is a positive faith? Is it a belief in signs and wonders, in sacred spots, in this or that special sanctity? These things may be believed, they may be held in connection with the faith of charity; but such belief is not the faith of charity; such beliefs are not necessarily positive. They may be so held as to exclude more than they include. They may cry, "God is here," or, "God is there." The cry of love, of the faith which springs from love, is, "God is everywhere." The large and positive faith of love does not necessarily express itself in long and multiplied articles of belief. The words "positive belief" and "large belief," we begin to see, are often wrongly used.

When, in this age of ours, elaborate and technical forms of belief are beginning to shrink and waste away, as the icebergs shrink and waste away as they float down towards the southern seas; when there is hardly a church, however guarded, in which this process is not to some extent going on; when from the heart of the religious bodies that were supposed to hold most strictly to the old formulas, comes a cry for relief, a demand that the ancient creeds must be revised in order that they may meet the demands and the needs of these later times, — when, I say, this disintegration of old beliefs is going on, there are those who cry that the ages of faith have passed; and who look back with longing to the ages when faith reigned supreme in the hearts of men. When did those ages exist? I suppose that when the "ages of faith" are spoken of, what is

meant is the time that we call mediæval. At any rate, this time may serve well enough as the type of a period in which what is so often called "faith" was most nearly supreme upon the earth. Now let us, in our imagination, try an experiment. Let us suppose that one who has felt something of the life of this nineteenth century be put back into one of these so-called ages of faith; I do not care from what relations you may take this person who is to serve for our experiment. He may be a Catholic or a Protestant, he may bear any label that you will; for there is no religious organization into which the breath of the later life has not found entrance, and in which it has not inspired many a soul. Put such a person, I say, back into one of these ages of faith, and ask whether in this old environment — old, yet to him new — his faith finds itself cramped, or enlarged. Doubtless his faith would find much to delight and stimulate it. There would be the glory of art, there would be the solemn pomp of worship, the beauty of processions. The presence of the Church would make itself felt every day, and under all the circumstances of his life. For one, I love the old Church, and I rejoice in what it has done for the world in its larger history; for the consolation and the strength that it has brought to many an oppressed spirit. Still the question remains: Would the person with whom we are trying our experiment find his faith enlarged or cramped by the change? He has looked upon God as the loving Father of men; he finds that His favor is narrowed to the children of the Church. He has looked with hope upon the men and women about him; he finds that his hope must be limited by the walls of an organization. He has found the glory of God in the heavens and upon the earth, and in the great history of man, and in the order of nature. All this is not excluded; but there is ever pressed upon

him this glory as manifested at special times and places, in a single line among the complicated threads of human history, and in interruptions of the order of nature. In a word, his faith, by whatever name it may be called, has caught from this modern age a certain freedom and largeness; put back into the older Church, he finds it bound and made artificial.

I am not arguing in regard to the truth or error of any form of belief. This is something with which, at the moment, we have nothing to do. I ask simply, which form of belief is most fully to be called faith? Which makes most demands upon the faculty that we call faith? Which flies most into the face of apparent facts and visible circumstances? There are inequalities in the world; there are differences, terrible differences, of opportunity and circumstance. That to which we are often pointed as the ideal faith emphasizes such differences and takes them up into itself. The faith to which the name is sometimes denied looks beyond them to a sphere or a time in which they shall exist no more. To which do the terms "positive" and "negative" most truly belong? To the one which is clad in the flowing garment of the divine love, or to the one that is shivering in scanty rags of hope and promise? The older and longer creed is positive in one sense. A board nailed over a window is something positive; it is real and tangible. It is a negation for all that, since it shuts out something of the light of heaven.

Do not think, then, that because the creeds are growing smaller, faith is therefore growing less. One of my earliest remembrances is of the shower, or rather the storm, of meteors that has been famous ever since. Unhappily, I did not see it. A servant of the household, who had risen early for some domestic duty, saw it and reported its fearful splendor. When asked why she did not sum-

mon the family, she said that she knew but three stars. They were those of Orion's belt, though she called them by a humbler name. She did not wish to leave the window until she had seen these join in the general havoc. She thought that the stars of heaven were falling, and stood watching with awe and terror the great catastrophe. The stars of heaven still shine on unmoved, types of the eternal truth which satisfies the gaze of faith. Clouds may pass, meteors may shoot across the sky, but the stars remain.

What I have called the larger faith is, at least, the faith of charity. Its essence is to believe the best of everything. It believes the best of man, it believes the best of God, it believes the best of immortality. It reaches in all directions after the best and the highest. When it has reached the best and the highest of which it can conceive, it believes it. If you ask for its evidence, its answer is, "I believe it because it seems to me the best. If it is false it is because there is a better which I have not yet found." This is argument enough. In its simplicity it cannot doubt that the best is omnipotent, and that the omnipotent is best. Such is the faith of the charity which hopeth all things and believeth all things.

But while you listen to this statement, while you read the words of Paul, beautiful as poetry, tender as a hymn, lofty with the very aspiration of his mighty soul, you must not forget what it is that believes and hopes and endures all things. The whole nature of the description depends upon this. Suppose it spoke simply of a man, or a woman, or a spirit, that believed all things, and hoped all things, and endured all things; it might be the description of a weak nature. It might imply foolishness, or absence of strong traits of character. A child will believe anything you tell it. It believes all things, but it is be-

cause it has neither experience nor judgment. I imagine that many reading these words of Paul look at the predicate and not at the subject. They are impressed by the hopefulness, by the inoffensiveness, by the endurance, by the credulousness. But there flows into the picture the full tide of life-blood when you think what it is that believes so much, and hopes so much, and endures so much. What was sweet as an idyl becomes sublime as a tragedy. What may have seemed weak as a dream of an impossible and bloodless ideal becomes strong as the mightiest passions of the heart, when you remember that it is charity, or in our heartier Saxon tongue, that it is love, which does all this. It is love which hopes all things. It is love which believes all things, which endures all things. It is real, passionate, human love, which in spite of what it sees and hears and knows clings to its object; endures from it all things, hopes for it all things, and believes in it in spite of all things. You see a mother leaning with a mother's pride and tenderness upon a son. The son you know. You know his vices, the evil habits to which he has yielded himself. You pity the mother for her fond blindness to what all others see so plainly. Pity her if you will, not because she is blind, but because she sees so much. Love is not blind; least of all, a mother's love. Do not believe that she failed to mark the first slight veiling of the pure confidence of the glance that used to be so frank, the first closing of the heart which used to be open to her as the day, the first sinking of the spirit which was so buoyant in its pure aspiration. She sees all as only love can see. She feels all as only love can feel. And yet because she loves she trusts, in spite of what she sees, in spite of the sorrow that fills her heart, — sorrow which she would breathe in no ear but one. Her love sees all, yet for its object it believes all things and hopes all things.

Such is the faith of love. It does not believe because it does not see, or because it does not feel. It believes because it loves. Extend this to more general relations. There is a faith in human nature that is mere indifference. It takes for granted that all will come out right because it does not care to trouble itself any further. It may call itself liberal, — as if there were any great liberality in thinking that things may be left to care for themselves! There is a faith in human nature which is romantic and sentimental. It is the fancy of the young. It is the dream of the visionary and the recluse. It will probably vanish if ever it comes in contact with men, and finds them, as they so often are, sordid, selfish, and mean.

There is another faith in human nature which is the faith of love. This can never lead to inaction; the greater its confidence, the heartier its stroke. It believes in men because it loves them. It sees their faults and their follies, their vices and their sins. It sees with the eye of love more of these than the satirist sees with the eye of scorn. What provokes his laughter moves its tears. But it finds something besides these faults and vices. Because it loves man, it believes in him. Did not Jesus know the evil that is in man? Did he not feel it, hanging on his cross? — save the weak women that followed him from afar, the friendliest face in view that of the centurion who was executing his sentence; all others full of scorn and hate. Yet even then he believed in men, because he loved them. "Father," he cried, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There is a faith in Jesus which is hard, dogmatic, traditional. It makes great account of what is official and functional. And there is a faith which is the faith of love. It sees his beauty, his tenderness, his holiness. It finds in him its ideal fulfilled, and it cares for little else.

Others may contend about the hard, dry, mechanical theories which men cling to as to him. It has reached his heart and nestles there. The faith that is jealous for outward and formal service and technical honor, may cry, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me." May it not be that Jesus would answer, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful." The love that simply rejoices in my love has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from it"?

There is a faith in God which is theoretical, traditional, mechanical. Some believe from habit, some from fear. But there is a faith which is born of love. He that in a flower, or a child, or in a tender mother's heart, or in the great soul of Jesus, or in his own spirit has caught sight of a flash of divinity, who in any way has come in contact with God, has seen anything of his beauty and his glory, so that a love for Him has filled his nature, and a faith which springs from love, — he believes indeed. He believes all things of God. All love, all holiness, all tenderness, all wisdom he finds in him. He resents all mingling of what he feels to be unjust in men's thought of him; he pities him who neither believes nor loves. But for himself, he would trust himself and all things to him.

This faith, wherever it is found, is the faith of love. Whatever its formal creed, it interprets it to suit itself. It may find itself surrounded with mysteries which it cannot solve, mysteries in its technical theology, mysteries in the outward nature; but it pierces through the mysteries till it finds Him in whom it believes.

The motto which Daniel Webster affixed to the published speech which turned the heart of New England from him was this: *Vera pro gratis*, — "Not the pleasant, but the true." It is a noble motto wherewith to meet the

hard experiences of life. It would make one bold to look facts in the face, to see things as they are. It would teach one not to live amid fancies, like an Eastern monarch among flattering slaves, until the realities of life no longer to be repressed, break in upon the fictitious peace, and the fleeing fancies leave the soul more helpless than at the first. I do not doubt that Webster himself gained courage from this motto. When he uttered terrible truths which his countrymen refused to hear, when he prophesied of evil which his statesman's eye foresaw, — evil which he knew would come unless the course he pointed out was taken; evil which did come, darker and more terrible than he dared to paint it, — I have no doubt that these words often rang through his thought: *Vera pro gratis*, — "Not the pleasant, but the true;" though I believe there was a truth, stern and awful, which even he did not dare to face.

It is a noble motto for life, but many would carry it into the realm of faith. They would apply it also to our belief in matters that concern the highest life. They picture, perhaps, God as cruel and unforgiving, and when our hearts protest, they answer, "Not the pleasant, but the true!" Or they may deny all reality to our dreams of spiritual things. They may see in the universe only material facts, only whirling atoms, and the driving forces which urge on their restless whirl. And when the orphaned heart cries out in its loneliness for the living God, they answer with words that give an air of nobility to their denial, "Not what is pleasant, but what is true."

But there are maxims that grow out of our little earthly experience which fail when they are applied upon a larger and freer scale. We have a proverb that tells us that the longest way may be the shortest. This is true as we move among the obstructions of the earth. Even our

railroads wind in and out among the hills. It is not true just a little way above our human paths. Where the bird flies, the straightest is the shortest. So we say that the day is always followed by the night. Just outside the shadow of the earth this is not true. There is no night there. So in our earthly life the true and the beautiful stand often over against one another. They meet in tragic collision. But in that vaster realm of infinite realities, that realm where the good and the beautiful blend into the true, the strife is at an end. In the limits of our earthly life love must plead often for its rights. It must learn often to forego them. It must wander often all the days of its human pilgrimage hungering for sympathy, disappointed where it had hoped the most, sorrowing with hope deferred, until it learns the great lesson, to see things not as it would have them but as they are. Here love is at the mercy of all things, but in that larger realm of which I spoke it reigns as queen. Here all things are reckoned more real than love, but there it is the central fact.

Such is the faith of charity. But upon what rests its faith? What demonstration can it offer of its truth? If it had demonstration, it would be no longer faith. There are, indeed, reasonings that may do something to suggest or to confirm it. There are arguments that go a little distance with it, as friends accompany one who is to start upon a journey and see him a little way upon his course; just as in regard to the physical world there are facts and arguments that accompany a little way the great faith in induction as it starts upon the flight which is to sweep the universe.

These arguments we are not to consider here; I point you now merely to the love that believeth all things.

When we come to the last analysis, what is this love

of the perfect which is an unfailing factor in the soul's life? What is this love which craves infinite satisfaction? This love that even in darkness sees the light, that even in the midst of the sternest stress and strain of the hard material forces of the world, feels the presence of a sublime companionship? What is this love that judges, condemns, commands? Other things change and pass away. Tongues shall cease, prophecies shall fail, knowledge shall vanish away; love alone endures, more mighty, more tender, through every change. This, by its very permanence, this by the divinity that shines out from it, must be recognized as the truest representative of the eternal reality; and schemes and systems must adapt themselves to this. Its touch tries them all. Only where it is supreme is there any truth. The poor, sad, earthly motto, — poor and sad however heroic it may be,— "Not the pleasant, but the true," loses its force and meaning in the presence of the sublime reaches of the infinite goodness, which is one with the infinite truth.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

Fourth Series.] [No. 93.

THE DIVINE UNITY.

BY

REV. AUGUSTUS WOODBURY, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose." — ARTICLE I. *of the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*

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THE DIVINE UNITY.

The truth of the Divine Unity is vastly greater and more significant than the doctrine of a simple personal monotheism. It is undoubtedly an advantage, both in intellectual and moral clearness, to have a distinct belief in one divine being, rather than in a plurality of gods. The conception in the mind is thus freed from obscurity and distraction, while the conscience is strongly re-enforced by the vision of a moral personality, eternally engaged in realizing an infinite ideal. This is really a profound truth. But is there not the revealing of a profounder truth still in the vision of God as a being all whose attributes are in harmony, who is wholly at one in his relations to Nature and humanity, whose kingdom is the essence both of authority and freedom, who is both sovereign Lord and universal Father, whose indisputable law has for its soul and spirit an eternal love, and the ideal of whose life is perpetually realizing itself in the perfecting of his creation? In Mr. Emerson's phrase, there is "a God of tradition and a God of rhetoric." We have to break from the teaching of past generations. We have to cease the use of language which is both too familiar and too inadequate an expression of a reverent thought. The consciousness of an indwelling divine Presence takes the place of a traditional authority. The sense of the Ineffable hushes the lips to a devout silence.

"Then may God fire the heart with his presence. It is the infinite enlargement of the heart," he says, "with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side. It inspires in man an infallible trust. He has not the conviction, but the sight, that the best is the true, and may in that thought easily dismiss all particular uncertainties and fears, and adjourn to the sure revelation of time the solution of his private riddles." In such a sense as this, the Divine Unity is the truth of truths, — the most joyous, the most animating, the most encouraging, the most inspiring, and the most quickening of truths.

We can readily understand, that in the nature of Deity, both attributes of being and qualities of character must be at one. Eternity and infinity, omnipotence and omniscience, wisdom, power, and love must consist with each other. There cannot be any conflict or discord among them. It is true, that when we attempt to define, we find ourselves limited within the boundaries of human knowledge, and so we fail to comprehend the truth in its fulness. The confession that we make to ourselves is by no means singular. The mystery of the divine Being continues unsolved. The language of the old patriarch is not altogether a foreign tongue: —

"Behold I go forward, but he is not there;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him;
On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him;
He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him,
But he knoweth the way that I take!"

Still, there are other ways of knowing than through the processes of the mind. The spirit within us, with its consciousness of God, and in full alliance with the divine spirit, sees, feels, knows, and trusts. It searches all things, even the deep things of God. It moves through

all the devout, reverent, and aspiring attitudes of the soul; through all its experience of struggle, striving, prayer, and praise; through its jubilant strains of exulting joy; through its agonizing cry for help in temptation and sorrow; through its penitence and its piety; through its defeats and triumphs. The spirit is of God and heareth God's words, and the glory of its revealings fairly irradiates and fully illumines all the way of life. Divine attributes become manifest to the spiritual consciousness. The divine Being comes within the circle of human knowledge. In the vocabulary of the spirit the word "unknowable" is not to be found. The pure in heart see God. Speaking through saints, apostles, prophets, the Christ of God, and all godly men and women, the spirit has declared that in God, beneath all superficial incongruity and dissonance, is the only true being and essential substance of life. In the complete unity of this being and substance with itself and its manifestations, the spirit finds the solution of every question and the composition of every perplexing doubt.

This being true, how can it ever be said that there is any conflict between the divine justice and the divine mercy? The declaration springs from the lack of spiritual power in the comprehension of the Divine Unity, and also from the fatal facility with which we ascribe to the divine character the possession of qualities which we find in ourselves. There is a certain conflict between the gentler and the sterner feelings of the human soul, and we are too ready to think that the same conflict exists in the divine character. Must the divine mercy wait until the divine justice is satisfied? Or is the divine justice to stay its hand at the call of the divine mercy? Must the sacrifice for sin be found before the sin can be forgiven? Does God love his erring child, and yet is he unable to

save him until justice has had its due? Let us be satisfied to know that there can be no such duality in the divine character as is thus suggested. The divine justice is always merciful and the divine mercy is always just. I am glad to be in the hands of a just God, who will always give me my deserts. I am quite sure that he would permit me to order my way before him. Would "He contend with me in the greatness of his power? Nay, but he will give heed to my words." I look to him with perfect confidence. I know that human justice errs; and in its narrowness of vision — nay, in its blindness holding the scales in which human actions are weighed — it does not always see the right. Herbert Spencer has lately said, that "sympathy, which a generation ago was taking the shape of justice, is relapsing into the shape of generosity; and the generosity is exercised by inflicting injustice." If this be true, it is but additional proof of the loss we have sustained in our imperfect idea of the divine government. We have still to learn that what is most just is most merciful, and that a true generosity does not inflict injustice. Especially must we avoid the error of confounding retaliation with justice. I am glad to feel that I am not altogether in the hands of men. I am to be judged by One who is absolutely impartial. Punished in my sin, as I deserve to be, and as I certainly shall be, — chastened in my sorrow, blessed in my pain, benefited in my loss, I know that all this is done in justice; and I also know that it is done in mercy. God is both merciful and just. One quality does not lag behind the other. Both go hand in hand through the divinely appointed way. One does not wear a different aspect from the other. Duty, in Wordsworth's language, is a "stern law-giver." Yet doth she "wear the Godhead's most benignant grace."

"Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face;
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads.
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are
fresh and strong."

In God surely justice and mercy are one, and we can trustfully rest in the assurance that toward all God's children they will be exercised in a truly divine way. Has man anything to fear? He has everything to hope for, when his hope is in God.

The same course of thought leads to the declaration that the divine sovereignty and the divine paternity are one. Do we address God as the King of kings? It is well. The divine Ruler commands among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth. Heaven and earth stand in awe of him. His dread decrees are to be obeyed implicitly and without question. His eternal purposes work themselves out to a full execution, and there can be no stay in the process. The divine power sweeps resistlessly along its course like a mountain glacier, hard, cold, pitiless, without haste, without rest, carrying desolation and destruction in its path. Is there no warmth in the plain below, to melt and soften its rigidity and convert it into a fertilizing stream to make the field glad with flowers and grain? What can the human soul do, beneath the crushing force of the divine sovereignty, but accept its fate with a stolid acquiescence in that which is inevitable? No prayers, no tears, no agonizing repentance can avail to turn aside the inexorable decree that has gone forth even from the foundation of the world. The divine sovereign sits upon the throne of the universe, unapproachable in his majesty, except through some mediating personage; ineffable in his dread name; terrible

in his doing toward the children of men. Let all the earth keep silence before him! Man, his subject, cannot look upon his face and live. Prostrate before this divine despot, the human soul cowers and cringes with intolerable fear, or flees for safety, hoping that the darkness will hide it from the frowning face of an angry God.

But, no! This is not an adequate conception of him whose dominion is everlasting, and whose kingdom ruleth over all. We look again with a clearer vision. The divine sovereign is the divine parent. We approach his presence with joy and thanksgiving. He is not an invisible deity carefully concealed from the eyes of his children. He lifts upon them the light of his countenance; and they only really live when they look into his face with an entire confidence and trust, and feel all their inner being irradiated with his glory. It is not with fearful and halting steps that they enter into his courts, but with a blithe, eager, and expectant spirit, because they know that they will be welcome. It is not a royal palace, guarded by vigilant sentinels, overawing all who approach with its splendor and its state, but it is the home of the spirit, — every room in the spacious mansion filled with good cheer, kindly hospitality, and paternal love. It is not the worship of the prostrate body, the bowed head, the bended knee, but the uplifted face shining with the light of a sincere love, and the eye beaming with the light of filial recognition. The divine sovereign is the divine father. He is calling continually to each one of us, high or humble as may be, "My son! my daughter! come to me, — dismiss thy fears; receive my blessing; share in my infinite good; live forever in my own eternal life!"

In the divine kingdom, too, the same unity prevails. In a kingdom there must be authority. Law must pre-

vail. But while the will of him who rules the kingdom is supreme, his love is boundless. Authority consents with freedom. The will of man accords with the divine will, and thus he enters into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Man is not the subject of a power from whose decisions there can be no appeal. But he is the self-governing citizen of a divine commonwealth. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the son to have life in himself." It is because the truly enlightened conscience is the revealer of the in-dwelling God, that the authority is an original and dynamic power, dwelling within the human soul that is conscious of its God. Such a power is always joyously exercised. Obedience then becomes, not compulsory, but wholly voluntary, — the human will responding with alacrity to the divine will. Thus it is that when a man is really conscious of being moved by the spirit of obedience to a divine command, he becomes as though he were inspired by a divine possession. He is filled with enthusiasm. He moves on to brave and heroic deeds. He forgets himself in his absorption in divine work. He is a fellow laborer with God. Even the common duty takes on dignity and power because it is helping even God himself to realize the divine ideal. Then, there is no enterprise too difficult, no danger too appalling, no death too painful for the child of God to endure. He counts it all joy that he is deemed worthy to suffer for the sake of duty, truth, his fellow men, and God. Thus martyrs have sung their hymns of rejoicing amidst the flames, saints and heroes have wrought their work for God and man, entering into fierce combats with pain and death, and winning the victory of virtue, — their weakness made strong, their weariness refreshed, the outward man perishing, the inward man perpetually renewed. The gladness

of the psalmist in the coming of the Lord to judge the earth in righteousness, the rapture of the prophet in the springing forth of peace and praise in the divine presence, the enthusiastic hope of Jesus and the apostles in the advent of the divine kingdom and the revealing of the sons of God, — all these are in the divine authority, and are also in the freed and growing and enlarging soul of obedient and trustful humanity. Truly new heavens and a new earth are here, wherein dwell righteousness and peace forever.

A step further in our thought brings us to the truth of the unity of the divine law and the divine love. Happy for the children of men that they are under the direction of him with whom is no variableness neither shadow cast by turning! Happy, indeed, that they are under the direction of a changeless law, which, both in its changelessness and its infinite elasticity, is working out for all an eternal good! Complex as human life is, and intricate as its lines appear to be, so that it sometimes seems like a labyrinth to which there is no clue, there yet must be, to the eye of him who can clearly see, a well-defined purpose running through the whole. The misfortune and the ill now manifest in the great calamities which send a thrill both of horror and sympathy through all human life; now in the petty annoyances and pestilent parasites, the end of whose creation seems shrouded in impenetrable mystery; again in the occult and insidious diseases that waste the human frame, baffling the skill of the physician, despoiling life of its enjoyment, hindering its usefulness and bringing it to an untimely end; still again in the extinction of beautiful, promising, and useful lives in their very prime, and the continuance of those which in human judgment seem actually to cumber the ground; yet once more in the sad personal blight, disappointment, and

heart-breaking bereavement that fairly desolate the soul, or in the terrible upheaval of social forces, in destructive war, in cruel slavery, in famine, pestilence, and plague, — all these aspects of life, which we call evil, are deeply provocative of questioning and doubt.

"Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life.

"I falter where I firmly trod;
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar stairs,
That slope through darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith and hope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Oh! how faintly do we trust the "larger hope" in the face of human sin and human sorrow, and Nature's pitiless scourging of human life! Bewildered by the working of these great forces which seem to be utterly regardless of human suffering and the unspeakable woe of human hearts, we anxiously ask ourselves if this be the divine love of which we long to be partakers. Or is there in the universe a malevolent, as well as a benevolent spirit, and does Satan contend with God for the possession and government of the world? Surely we cannot believe in a dual God, an evil as well as a good spirit, a power that makes sport of human misery, an infernal force that sets at defiance the supernal deity. The universe is not large enough for two such beings. Inexplicable confusion, irremediable disorder would be the sure result. Our confidence in the universal order would be brought to an end.

It were better for us not to be at all. Is it in the limitation of our own powers, so that we can see but the outskirts of the divine ways, and hear but the whisper of the divine voice? Is it, that, like the weavers of the famous tapestry of France, we can only see the wrong side of the design upon which we are working, and do not know what figures of beauty, harmony, and grace our own feeble fingers are putting into the providential result?

We return to the truth of the unity of law and love. As the law governs the most vast and the most minute, the light and the darkness, the sunshine and the storm, so the love must touch, with its finger both of strength and tenderness, all the phases and forms of human experience. The same element is in the tornado and the zephyr. The fire is both useful and destructive, purifying even when it consumes. The lightning runs upon our most familiar errands, even though it may strike us dead. The water may drown us and rise in fury beneath the lashing of the tempest, but it floats our ships, carries in one form or another our industries to success, rises on invisible wings to temper the atmosphere, and falls again in genial showers upon our thirsty fields. Even disease has its uses and pain its ministry. The smallest thing, as well as the largest, hints the presence of universal power. The mote in the sunbeam feels the touch of the same great force that holds the stars in their places. The flower and the grass cannot grow at all except under the influence of a power which comes on unseen paths, through the wide spaces of the universe, to draw the little plant upward to the light and give it life. The sparrow, scarcely worth a farthing, cannot fall to the ground, or lift itself on joyful wing, without your Father. "It is all law," says Science, looking into the secrets of the universe. "It is all love," says Jesus, looking into the

deep things of God. There is a living spirit of goodness, — "an unspeakable beneficence," — at the heart of things, and law and love are one.

We are led still further on, to the declaration that God is at one with Nature and Humanity. For if in all the attributes of his power and the qualities of his character he is one, then in all the manifestations and results of these, in the substance of things, in the works of His hands, and most of all in the living souls which become quickening spirits by the breathing of his love, he must also be one. That which is in Nature the informing and inspiring presence —

> "A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things;
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky" —

is also "in the mind of man." What a trinity is this, — God, Nature, Humanity! What unity in trinity! The poets have sung the truth, the philosophers have found it the solution of their problems, the sages have seen it in their spiritual vision, the prophets have declared it in their burning words, the saints of God have rejoiced in it as the source and fountain of their trusting life, and Jesus, in his nearness to God and union with him, has made it the central truth of the religion that is to save mankind from every ill. It is God, with and within us, above, around, beneath, besetting all life behind and before, that is the inspiration, the power, the blessing of all pure, joyous, noble, heroic, divine living. Is it a divine incarnation, or a human apotheosis? Is it the descent of God? Is it not the ascent of man? For the child of God, rising to that high summit of spiritual

being where he can look over the wide expanse, sees God everywhere present, the light and life of all things. What, then, is the work of science, but to reveal the presence of God in all the universe of being? What has history to teach but the presence of the same infinite Being in all the growing and enlarging life of man? "With the living God to lead them on," says James Martineau, "the centuries must brighten as they roll, or if a darkness broods over them, must burst into richer sunshine after the passing storm. Life is to be spent not in sighs of regret, but in the joy of hope and the power of faith."

Finally, as the climax and culmination of our thought, we have to consider the unity of the infinite ideal, which is in the mind of God, and the vision of that ideal which, in the mind of man, beckons and impels him to the noblest and best life of which he is capable. It is not too much to say that the divine ideal is that of absolute perfection, and that the divine wisdom, power, and love are constantly exercised in Nature and in human life, with the purpose of making that ideal real. It is a God of perfect holiness that is to be revealed to human aspiration, knowledge, trust, and love. How can he be revealed and known, except to a perfect humanity; and how can humanity become perfect, except by keeping itself forever true to the divine ideal? "Be ye perfect, even as your Father is perfect!" says Jesus. It is this ideal that saves the world. It is the power that is in it, that inspires the best endeavor and the noblest life, which you and I are trying to make real. Lose it, and everything is lost. Lower it, and life becomes mean, sordid, and base. Cherish it, hold it fast, obey it, and there is a spirit in the life that sets manhood on to the perfection of its virtue and womanhood to the fulness of its beauty. Well

does Dr. Abbot say: "That divine passion for the finite ideal which makes the hero, the reformer, the prophet, the saint, is a spark of that eternal and ethereal fire, which burns at the very heart of being and keeps God himself true to his own infinite ideal." May I not add, that man, moved by the power of such passionate devotion to the ideal perfection, will himself create new heavens and a new earth, — fit dwelling-place for the perfect humanity that knows, loves, trusts, and obeys a perfect God!

"I report, as a man may, of God's work, — all 's love yet all 's law.
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? Confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? How purblind, how blank to the Infinite Care!
Do I task any faculty highest to image success?
I but open my eyes, and Perfection — no more and no less —
In the kind I imagined, full fronts me, and God is seen God,
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul, and the clod!
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew,
With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it, too,
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit I climb to his feet!"

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

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[No. 94]

THE

RADICAL DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY AND ORTHODOXY.

BY

REV. THOMAS L. ELIOT, D. D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

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THE RADICAL DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY AND ORTHODOXY.

In the present undertaking of a series of evening discourses, my associate and myself have two purposes. The first is to impress upon the members of our own church and congregation more definitely the things commonly believed among us in their vital meaning; and the second purpose is to meet inquirers, of whom there is an increasing number, including doubters and critics, and give them an opportunity to hear the principles which Unitarians maintain and the truths they trust, as well as to make known to them the communications of divine things which the Unitarian looks to for the inspiration of his life. In one sense, indeed, all the preaching from this pulpit is doctrinal, for preaching is only teaching, and teaching is only "doctrine" written large. The instruction and exhortations of this place all spring from certain convictions concerning God and man, and duty and destiny, deeply cherished by the speakers, who could not stand here an instant without the conviction of mighty, upholding truths, living words of God, from which they try to give messages and of which they try to be witnesses. But occasions come when we should present these truths in definite contrasts, and describe them in and through their opposites. All knowledge is simply classification,

and classes are known only in differences. We think the hour and times ripe for declaring anew and strongly the radical distinctions in the point of view and in the methods of spiritual apprehension between what is known as Orthodoxy and Liberal Christianity. We would note these differences with earnest charity, and with a constant sense of the fact that Christlike lives spring up everywhere, under every creed, from a deep subsoil of the unwritten grace of God. This fact, however, when rightly analyzed, we think, does not at all lessen the importance of having a right belief. True intellectual conceptions are of immense importance, and historically affect whole civilizations. Individuals may be better or worse than their apparent creeds; but their creeds, so far as they really express convictions, almost always color life and character, and immediately affect all action. And here let us spend a moment upon that cant speech which is sometimes still heard in the mouths of our own Unitarian people, that "it makes no difference what a man believes, so that he does right." There is a sophism and a danger in such words. The phrase came into vogue probably from the vast amount of unconscious "make-believe" that there is in the religious world. For when creeds are made standards of religious union one man may take his creed at second-hand, may call it his without really understanding or appropriating it, while another man may be without any such formal profession; yet both of these men may be "doing right," — leading what are called good lives. And judging superficially, an observer might say it makes no difference what they believe, nor what their creeds are or are not. But it would be easy to show that each of these men has, at least with reference to conduct, some under-convictions and roots of confidence, some real beliefs, which vastly concern his own life and other people's. We

do not say it makes no difference what a farmer believes about soils, or what a sailor believes about navigation, for we know what he really believes he does and acts upon; the crop or the voyage is profoundly affected by that belief.

The Hindu people, the most religious portion of them, believe that this material world is an illusion, a mere dream; and acting upon this real belief, take no sort nor manner of interest in the beauty and order of Nature, and cultivate no physical sciences. What we call science is impossible with that prior conviction of all visible things being mere dream stuff. This erroneous philosophy of India has made an immense difference in the civilization of half of Asia. Torquemada, in Spain, believed in common with his age that God hated and punished a heretic everlastingly; and his belief, being real, profoundly affected his action. "He thought he did right" by torturing and burning thousands of his fellow-beings. That he did not really do right let history declare, which holds his name almost in execration. Let it then be remembered that Unitarians, men and women who are such from conviction, attach vital importance to right thinking and to true doctrine, although as a denomination they have no formal creed. And if you ask why Unitarians have discredited formal creeds, the answer is, Because of the abuse made of them; because a creed that is made authoritative seems to us to arrest human thought, and to shut out the living and progressive revelations of Truth. But right belief, and growing into more and more perfect statement of it, we deem to be a duty of the highest order. It is therefore we, and not Orthodox Christians, who are pressing the question of belief, — we, and not they, who push intellectual activity; and we think it is of God's inspiration that our church exists to vindicate

the deeper truth and larger methods of his grace, in order that they, as well as we, may live diviner lives.

Let us now note as sharply as we can that radical difference between Liberal Christianity and Orthodoxy which is brought out by the question of Authority. This is the question the answer to which constitutes the fundamental divisions of Christianity. What is your authority? is a common query even in every-day affairs where men's judgments and conduct are at issue. For example, how am I to spell a certain word? My friend and I differ. I say, Let us consult the dictionary; and I lay hold on my Webster. But, says he, I consider Worcester the authority in spelling. A third person might say, Consult the Century Dictionary; that, without doubt, is the highest authority we now have about words, either in spelling or definition. Now, unless we can agree upon one authority as final or better than others, we must agree to disagree. Take another example. If a man has a controversy at law, say about a boundary and some supposed trespass, the parties first appear in a justice court. Then, perhaps, the case is appealed to a higher court, and again to the supreme court of the State, and again, when the subject-matter is momentous, the case may reach the Supreme Court of the United States. That is the final authority in all law questions, beyond which there is no appeal. All litigants agree to it, and its answer settles permanently the principles of national law and interpretation of statutes. So in religion the special questions asked about special doctrines are all secondary to the great main question — about authority. What is your court of final appeal? Where do you go for your final word and guidance, among conflicts and differing testimonies and experiences? Let us carefully note the answers given, and I think we shall see how fundamental are the differences — how distinctly they

throw the thinkers into great divisions or classes. There are three cited authorities or sources of light which men can consider when the question arises, religion-wise, as to what they shall think and do. One is the average consciousness, the ordinary intelligence, the personal sense of truth or error, of right or wrong, or the average moral sense. Another source of light is called Revelation, especially as it is contained in elect experiences and records. Another source of authority is some body of men who by superior wisdom or traditions are deemed qualified as interpreters, — a corporation, so to speak, who hold in trust all the possible solutions and answers. Shortly, we may describe them as Reason, the Bible, the Church; and let us bring up to these the three actual divisions of Christendom, — the Roman Catholic, the Evangelical Protestant, and the Liberal Christian.

You will please note that all of them believe in and use all these means, but differ in the rank assigned to each. The Roman Catholic believes in all three of these sources of knowledge. He uses Reason,— he appeals to it in himself and in other men. He also believes in the Bible, and appeals to that for a large part of what he thinks and does and believes. But above all he believes in the Church as a divine oracle, a miraculously constituted authority. The consistent Roman Catholic stands firmly and unfalteringly upon the Church and its representative decisions for final truth. The Church for the Catholic interprets the Bible, and continues the direct revelation of the truth. The Church is above Reason, either of the individual or of collective humanity. The Roman Church through its institutions declares what its members shall do and say, and even what they shall think on matters of faith or knowledge. The Greek Church belongs to this same class, though separate ecclesiastically, because in the same way

the authority about any doctrine is with the Church. And we may say the Episcopal communion also, — that portion which really believes in the apostolic succession and its authority, may be classed with the Roman Catholic; as a matter of fact the strictest Episcopalians are, by the logic of their High Church doctrines, often carried over to the Roman Catholic fold.

Let us now turn to Evangelical Protestantism. Here again we may say all three of the authorities we have named are believed in, for the Protestant reasons and takes the reasoning of others. He believes also in the higher collective wisdom of the Church as an organized institution, and in the traditions it adopts, or the symbols or creeds it ordains; but his final authority, his supreme court of appeal, is the Bible and the word of God there contained, which is to him infallible for all spiritual and moral truth. Protestants are, indeed, divided into many sects, according to the interpretation which is put upon Scripture, or the emphasis of some doctrines, or form or method of Church government; but they unite in declaring the Bible to be finally authoritative. For example, the Calvinist claims that the Bible teaches election and predestination; the Arminian claims that the Bible teaches free grace offered to all; and the Seventh-Day Adventist finds the perpetual ordinance of the Saturday-Sabbath there; but what really unites them all in one body, as contrasted with Roman Catholics, is that they declare the Bible to be really and finally their authority. What they differ about is only the interpretation; but they intend to believe and obey whatever the Bible says. Suppose the doctrine of everlasting punishment is in court. The Evangelical Protestant accepts it simply and only because he thinks he finds it in the Bible. Many Evangelical believers admit that Reason and Conscience protest

against it, but the protest is sternly put down, and is called a temptation of the Devil. Doctrines like the trinity, or vicarious atonement, or the miraculous conception, or second advent, are generally believed, when believed by Protestants, on the authority of the Bible over the Reason and Conscience which may seem to testify against them.

So much for the classification of Catholic and Evangelical Protestants. You are now prepared, I trust, by the lines already indicated, to anticipate the Liberal Christian position. Like the others, the Liberal Christian accepts all three authorities; but he takes up the remaining possible position, as to which is, if not final and supremely authoritative, at least the highest authority, and progressively final in the history of our race.

The Unitarian receives the Bible and the Church,— the former as a historical monument of immense value, the greatest religious literature on earth. He values each as a depositary of truth and holiness, but he holds neither of them to be infallible nor authoritative in any sense of finality. The supreme court of the Liberal Christian is Reason; not, I beg you to consider, not any man's and every man's reasoning; not anything that may chance to come into a man's head, nor even what is called the understanding or logical faculty in man; not the reason of Asia or Europe, but Reason in universal humanity. We use the word Reason in a high and generic sense,— for the cumulative consciousness, thought, conscience, and the continuity of spiritual apprehension in man, in men, in human nature. And in order to convey more fully what we mean, we prefer to say that our supreme court, our final authority, is the voice of God speaking in and through the Reason as its perpetual tabernacle. We regard as the ground of all truth the perpetual covenant of light and life from God to man. By Reason we mean no less than that.

It is the totality of human capacity to discover and receive divine truth, and to receive its testimony down to the present hour. If you ask whose Reason, and how the decisions are made up and become authoritative, I answer that the selection is all the while going on, and the answers are being registered in the truths that survive and nourish the race.

You will see then how the Unitarian will measure and interpret any alleged doctrine, as, for example, of everlasting punishment. The authority of the Church, though it be so august as the Roman Catholic with century-laden traditions, is not final. Nor the authority of the Bible, even did that unquestionably testify to everlasting punishment, which we do not think it does; but were the doctrine of eternal doom written on every page, the Unitarian would still carry it to the court of higher appeal, — to the Reason and Conscience of humanity, to the voice of God speaking there, for a better interpretation of the facts of sin and penalty, of human freedom and divine holiness and love. To the Second Adventist, with his doctrine of a world catastrophe prophesied in Scripture, the Unitarian again answers with an appeal to higher authority. God, he says, has written his thought into rocks and stars, into science as well as into ancient philosophies and experiences; and his majesty is in the progressive growth of ages; and the prophecies of his methods in years to come are seen in his method for ages past. Reason, the collective thought and measure in universal humanity, the accumulation of revised intelligence of the present age, is the court of appeal, the highest we know. Take the doctrine of the second advent there, and how speedily it is "dismissed with costs." It does not belong to the order of Nature and God's methods, as revealed to the living world. The Unitarian's higher authority thus

meets and disposes of numberless phases of false or half-true doctrine, and enables him fearlessly to carry to the Bible itself the critical inquiries which qualify and classify its books and writers and literary form and contents.

I wish I might convey to my hearers my own profound sense of the majestic authority, as from the very presence of a revealing God, which seems to me the possession of a believer who clearly apprehends the principles I have just stated. For when we appeal to Reason, that total consciousness of the highest and best gifts of God, we are really believing in God as living, and are realizing that in him we live and move and have our being. There is a phrase that is much used to express this, "the consensus of the competent." It means that for every sphere of knowledge or endeavor there are best names and noblest experiences, to whom others learn to look up and trust. Such men are the world's great masters, and they are gladly looked to and called authorities. Using the word in a free sense, authority is everywhere about us,— the authority of intelligence, of the artistic sense, of the physician in disease, the engineer in a construction, the pilot in a harbor, the statesman in a national crisis, the great soldier in time of war. There is an authority of character. The mere word or look of some men carries a greater weight than that of hundreds of inferior intelligence. But we never think of appealing to such authority as final or infallible, or class it above Reason, the result of some sixth sense. Rather do we exalt Reason when we clothe its servants with authority of this kind. We recognize that there are leaders and guides in intellectual and spiritual truth, but they bring us that truth from the infinite Source of truth, who speaks in the language of their Reason and of ours. The message and the witness of truth is thus progressive, ever growing and added to from the eternal

word of God. Just as the first star-gazer saw the same stars and planets in the night sky that we do, so the truths of man's nature and destiny have forever overarched our race. As the first astronomers knew in part and prophesied in part, so some truths of the divine nature and human duty were known from the earliest day, and other truths are forecast even in their errors. As the early astronomers made observations under the limitations of their senses, and theorized provisionally, so the early worshippers held crude and imperfect conceptions and made grave mistakes. But the eternal Truth has lived on, and the word of God, pressing into human moulds, lives to day, the Light which lightens every man who comes into the world. The formula which Unitarians would speak and place in contrast to all partial creeds and less noble authority is these words, a phrase of Rowland Williams, a leading divine of the Broad Church of England: "We believe in God, whose Scripture is the world, and whose Son is mankind."

[No. 95]

THE OLD MOTIVES

AND

THE NEW MOTIVES IN RELIGION CONTRASTED.

BY

REV. THOMAS R. SLICER.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

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(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association*).

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"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE

OLD MOTIVES AND THE NEW MOTIVES IN RELIGION CONTRASTED.

What are these old motives to religion? They scarcely need naming. They have all one spring for their origin and one purpose in their operation. They originate in the assumption that man is in a lost state, fallen from a state of innocence so complete that the moment he knew anything he discovered that he had destroyed himself because he did not know anything. In other words, the effort to know "what was good and what was evil" had left him with the perilous knowledge, but without the power to make any use of it for his own advantage,— the first instance of higher education at the expense of practical life. What a very simple fiction is here, destined to overthrow the self-respect of the human race! This is the starting-point of every motive to religion of that older type. A totally depraved human nature speculates upon the possibility of its further ruin, and admits that it cannot save itself. It hears now the command, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth;" and if its reasoning powers had not gone down in the general reduction of moral values, it would know that such a command would be equivalent to lifting all restrictions from contagion and pronouncing a blessing on the spread of disease. But here appears not the logical conclusion that self-destruction is

the whole duty of man, if he is capable of no good thing; but instead there is revealed to this fallen creature by the baffled Creator that what he cannot do, and what God could not do the first time He tried, has now been made possible, and a system of nicely graduated forfeits has been adopted in Heaven for the regulation of earth, — a system which begins in human sacrifices to an inhuman deity, and ends in a sacrifice in which the sufferer is at once the victim, the priest, the Saviour, and God himself. Henceforward man's debt is paid, and "heaven is opened to all believers" who can believe the impossible. Was there ever in the history of religions a more complete wreck of reason and failure of common-sense? It justifies the characterization of it given by Macaulay: "It is the perpetration of an impossible offence to be paid for in an inconceivable coin."

Now, it is not for a moment to be understood that this brief statement is the whole history of this doctrine of the recovery of man by religion. It is instead the resultant of the speculations of the Church since the days of Anselm, — the Church that professes to speak for historic Christianity. Of course, we perfectly know that no such scheme can be injected successfully into the Old Testament scripture, where, after the telling of the stories of the creation which Hebrew thought had borrowed, it goes on to work out life's problems in a practical conflict between the authority of the priest and the moral passion of the prophets. We know with equal clearness that no such scheme is hinted at by Jesus of Nazareth in any record of his thoughts remaining to us. That record gives us indubitable proof that his one purpose was to convince the spiritual nature of man that it had inalienable rights in the fatherhood of God. Therefore, he has no theory of the "Fall of Man," and tells the sublimest truths of his religion,

— the fatherhood of God, the universality of religion, and the spirituality of worship,— to the humblest and least respectable of the common people who surround him; and he gives as his justification that these things are not for "the wise and the prudent,"— the sophisticated and the canny, "but for babes,"— simple people, who are nearest to the naturalness of life. Nor did the early Church lay the burden of this rescue of man on any metaphysical compact worked out in what Jonathan Edwards, with unconscious humor, called "The Social Trinity." For nearly eight centuries the early Church entertained as its theory of atonement a dramatic plan of attack, in which, as in a stupendous duel between the Son of God and the Prince of this world, the apparent overthrow of the heavenly champion is the real defeat of the earthly usurper and rebellious ruler of the earth.

When later the profligate youth of Anselm turned to piety with "the precipitate of the young blood," the tides of his repentance flowed in on his thought of God; and the divine wrath to be appeased was in the exact ratio of the sense of sin to be forgiven. It was an illustration of that acute remark of Fontanelle, "God made man in his own image, and man has ever since returned the compliment by making God in his."

There is nothing sacred about the fashions in theology which should make them objects of reverence. They do not bear upon their front the shining stones of the high-priest's breastplate, in the glitter of which we are to discover the will of God. It has been a part of the tyranny exercised upon the minds of the unlearned that they have been led to accept as of divine authority those shifting theories of atonement which have left man still struggling with his sin. God was to be satisfied, but at the expense of the growing discontent of his children.

One word is the synonym for the motives moving toward religion in all this; and that word is "fear,"—fear of God, for his wrath is hanging over unrepentant man; fear of sin, for it is the suggestion of an evil power which divides the sovereignty of the world with God, a Frankenstein which defies all efforts of its author to control it; fear of life's delights, as being a snare; fear to love one's wife and children too much, lest we lose them by a jealous God's determination that we shall love only him, "and enjoy him forever;" fear of the sweet-souled Son of Man, for he is to be our judge; fear of death, for it ends probation and fixes our eternal state; fear of hell, for it is a place into which the saints can see, but none can go for rescue, even if being in heaven had not diverted every tender affection of their human lives. These were the manifold fears which moved men of old to love God. Even Carlyle quotes with approval the bitter proverb, "Thou wouldst do little for God if the Devil were dead."

Well, the Devil is dead. Are there few that serve God? We answer, The age is profoundly religious. Profoundly religious, though it has repudiated a trembling timidity, and declares for the soul's right to know God unhindered by any fear. It matters nothing to the aspect of the sunrise and its day, and nothing to the quiet evening with its stars that Copernicus reversed the procession of the planetary system, and plucked the still earth from the centre and set it spinning on the levels of the lighted path which now it must obediently follow. Men still look eastward for the lamp which lights them to their labor, and westward for the flaming signal which bids them go to rest. The facts remain when all their definitions change. God himself is "constant to a constant change." So religion grows. Its wider heaven invites it, and stoops to welcome its approach. Long ago it was written that "perfect love

casteth out fear, for fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." So it has come to pass, since love is the supreme grace of life, since love is the test of relationship between God and his children and between those children themselves, since love is God's other name, which we use when the old name has lost its meaning. So it must be true that love, casting out fear, grows to fill the place which was occupied by fear, and turns to do the duties which fear, the cripple, could not do.

The new motives for religion shine by contrast with the old motives, in that the religion of to-day repudiates fear. It is not afraid of human nature; for it is the very ground of religion, and grows that religion as native to its soil.

It is not afraid of the consequences of sin; for since they cannot be escaped nor evaded in any world, religion declares for life dedicated to the will of God. Of sin it is afraid, as one might fear a wild creature not yet tamed.

Religion now is not afraid of life, for it is not so much a probation nor a discipline as it is an opportunity and a delight. It is not afraid of life's tenderest and purest relationships, for "in their face do we behold the Eternal." The humanities of God visit us in love's daily sacraments, and we are purified as we commune with God, calling him by household names; and when upon our common life fall its common sorrows, we do not fear the hand of God is on us. We rather believe that underneath us are "the everlasting arms," and we "commit our souls in well-doing unto him as unto a faithful Creator."

Thus shred by shred our fears fall from us; and our souls are "not unclothed, but clothed upon," for already "mortality is swallowed up of life." Thus the new watchword of religion is love. Its new expression is life.

But the change appears not alone in this deepening confidence in God as in his world; but it declares for life

here and now, between men the bond of obligation and the guarantee of justice. The old view put religion first and morals second,— not in their order, which is the order of Nature, but in their importance, which is not the order of Nature. Religion is before morals, as God was before man ; but the apprehension of religion must be ever in the terms of human relationships, so that the new motives of religion are finer than the word spoken only lately in a Christian church, in which it was declared to be "safer to accept baptism with a life astray than to lead a good life and forego that saving sacrament." It was prescribed as a greater safety. Men who feel the new motives refuse to be safe, and pray to be doomed to the company of the good, wherever they may be. And to this end religion in its sanest moments ceases to be too introspective or speculative or transcendental. All these it may be, according to the genius and temperament of its subject; but first of all, it declares its business to be the adjustment of human relations, "the making the world a better place to live in." It is first ethical and then spiritual. It finds more of God in the righting of wrong than in the mystic reveries of a secluded sanctity. For this reason in all the churches the life of the man "who went about doing good" places the beautiful pictures of the Beatitudes so constantly before reverent eyes that already the pure in heart begin to see God, and to see him unconfused by any theory of his Being or conflict of his attributes. Religion is so busy bringing in the kingdom of man, making it, as the Son of man declared it should be, the very kingdom of heaven, that we have been much turned away from settling nice questions of the employments of God "before all worlds," the administration of God in this world, and the destiny of God's children in any world. We have thus put the duty of religion into the present tense, and have made "the

stern daughter of the voice of God" more than the echo which it must be to the Pharisee and Scribe of any age. We no longer quote much. The verdict of those who heard the great Teacher was the verdict of the convicted mind. He speaks "as one having authority." Religion fails of its audience and of its mission when it becomes a mere echo of full words spoken long ago. It has come to pass that this focalizing of enthusiasm in the present and the near future has changed the whole outlook of religion, has given a new purpose to the Church, has intensified the sense of work to be done in the ministry of religion, has even simplified and clarified the very vocabulary of prayer.

Of course, as a result of all this, it is said, "Theology has become shallow," "The queen of the sciences has lost her throne." This last is true; for the throne was deserted by the court, and the court has been repudiated by the people, and the monarchical system of priestly and learned rule is passing away, and we of this age are witnessing a revolt of reason which will lead eventually to the commonwealth of free souls.

But the other claim, that theology has become shallow, deserves a word of recognition. Was theology ever other than shallow since those earliest days when it left the adoration of the ultimate good, and determined in fanciful speculation what the ultimate good was like; when it discussed with wrath and blows whether "one begotten of the unbegotten inherited the unbegottenness of his begetter"? Was it less shallow when it left the Greek intuition of God as immanent, and pitched upon the Roman imperial conceit of God as regnant and magisterial? Is it more shallow now that religion is slowly and painfully feeling its way back again to the larger thought of the Greek, as alone large enough to match the universe

new-discovered by those who have sailed that "sea of darkness" which modern science has bravely crossed? Is theology in its Seminaries likely to become more profound, when it turns from the preparation of men for the ministry of religion, and appeals to courts of law, secular and ecclesiastical, to confirm it in its investments, that it may "live by bread alone" rather than by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"? Has the profundity of theology satisfied itself when it has matched unspeakable mysteries to unanswerable questions? Does it feel vindicated by setting standards of judgment for its missionaries in those very particulars which the moment he lands among a more enlightened heathen the missionary must never remember or learn to forget?

No. The answer to all this claim against the new motives which move men to religion, that they lead to a shallow theology is simply this: Speculative theology always was and must be shallow. The deep-sea soundings of the life of God show nothing brought up from that abysm. We move about the errands of our little lives upon the surface of this profound of being. We have forgotten the day we set sail. We do not know on what shore we shall land at last. We are carried willingly forward by that breath of God that "breatheth where it will." We rejoice to feel the tides of the Eternal Spirit lift and sway us; but when we would sound this awful depth, our plummet swings in the shifting currents of the surface near the hand which holds it, and the silent deeps of God give back no word. The new motives for religion match themselves to the oldest in this: "Thy way is in the sea, thy paths in the great waters, thy footsteps are not known." "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains. Thy judgments are a great deep." Justice and judgment are the foundation of thy throne." Compared with these

deliverances of the most ancient and the newest faith, the superficial guesses about God that are elevated to the authority of knowledge strike the reverent soul as profane, — a hindrance at once to the purity of religion and the strength of reason.

It has been well said: "The dissolution of a mythology is no less natural a process than its growth, and is indeed secured the moment we have discovered how it has grown. To see its construction is to feel its dissolution" (Martineau).

That which may be said of any mythology applies to all theology on its speculative side, and its hindrance to real religion is in the exact proportion in which it declares its definitions final and all contradiction of them a breach of orthodoxy. We have not long gone by that date which celebrates the nailing of Luther's theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. The experience of four hundred years has confirmed the great truth which he thus enunciated: —

"I will be free, and not give myself prisoner to any authority, be it that of the Emperor or the universities or the Pope, in order that I may confidently declare everything which I recognize as truth, be it maintained by a Catholic or by a heretic, whether a Church Council has accepted it or rejected it."

Thus Luther, harried by theological experts and ecclesiastical inquisition, spoke; but Channing spoke for the same large interpretation of human liberty in the interest of a deeper religious life when he said: "The right to which we are bound is not insulated, but connected, and one with the infinite rectitude and with all the virtue of all being. In following it, we promote the health of the universe" (Note-book).

Or again, it may be said in the language of a great

teacher of the present time, "The paramount aim of religion is to seek with all our might the highest welfare of the world we live in, and the realization of its ideal greatness and nobleness and blessedness" (Professor Edward Caird). This is but an elaboration of the golden rule announced by Emanuel Kant: "Act as though the principle by which you act were by your will to become a universal law of Nature."

How easy it seems for religion, hearing these utterances of inspired spiritual life, to lay aside all crutches which are offered to its robust activity! It is not lame nor maimed nor feeble. It stands erect, and exhorts its fellows to freedom with the words: —

> "Lean not on one mind constantly,
> Lest where one stood before two fall.
> Something God hath to say to thee,
> Worth hearing, from the lips of all.
>
> "All things are thine estate, yet must
> Thou first display the title-deeds,
> And sue the world. Be strong, and trust
> High instincts more than all the creeds."

What does this brief contrast of the "old motives to religion" with the motives called "new" leave us for our strengthening as religious men and women?

The old motives were based in definitions concerning God and man, as at variance. The new motives show God and man sharing the same life and embraced in the same unity of being.

The old motives sought a means to reconcile God to man. The new motives beseech man "to be reconciled to God."

The old motives bade man fear God, and love him in the midst of fear. The new motives show God as man's best friend by no persuasion, but by consciousness of love

that casteth out fear. "He puts his hand into the hand of the Infinite Ally."

The old motives measured religion by intellectual accuracy as judged by standards in the keeping of a class. The new motives measure religion by human sympathy judged by the nature and necessities of man.

The old motives had for their inspiration the mediation of a unique personage, who came between God and man. The new motives hail this revealer of God who comes between God and man only as the lenses of the telescope come between the eye and the stars.

The old motives bade us love God for what Christ had done, and left us worshipping Christ for what God had done, thus reversing by the logic of the heart the dictates of the schools. The new motives lead to a worship of God which has for its opening sentence, "Each man shall find God for himself,"— Jesus of Nazareth and all his brothers in the spirit alike in this divine task.

The old motives summoned us to obedience by commands of an external law. The new motives win us to obedience by loyalty to laws which are written in our nature, and read in the highest and dearest relations of life. The old motives were regulative and provisional. The penalties came early in their messages. The new motives are constitutive and constructive, and their penalties are not present to any mind which loves the truth and serves it.

The old motives were an invitation to happiness in a remote and vague heaven. The new motives declare "God to be the happiest being in the universe," and all souls to be glad here and always with his joy.

Thus the man whose religion has become a passionate devotion to the will of God, has put away from him, as irreligious in themselves and tending to irreligion, all motives that are grounded in self-interest and in distrust of

the order of God's world, all motives that are simply regulative and a compromise with the weakness of the baser nature, all motives that shut the soul away from immediate communion with the fatherhood of God, all motives which separate and estrange the brothers of the race, all motives which separate life into secular and sacred, present and future, earthly and heavenly. The man who thus dedicates himself to the religion of to-day finds in its newer, clearer, stronger motives abundant compensation for what may seem a loss to those less devoted to reality.

If it be said to such a one, This is not Christianity as we see it to-day, he replies: It may not be modern Christianity, but it is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. But it does not need even that great name to certify it to the experience of the soul. The human soul has a right to its own discoveries. It knows what it has made its own. If it be said that such a test is too much to ask, and must make religion difficult to adjust to practical life, let it be remembered, if this be so, the test of religion is not the practical life of our brute existence, but the practical outcome of our spiritual faculties. Then we answer in that fine sentence of a devoted champion of the newer faith, "In certain noble natures deep thinking and high feeling have become a necessity, and the only deliverance for them is in deeper thinking and in higher feeling."

CHANNING'S NOTE BOOK

Passages from the Unpublished Manuscripts of William Ellery Channing. Selected by his granddaughter, Grace Ellery Channing

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 110; price, 50 cents *net;* postage, 5 cents.

THE origin and character of this book add to the interest of the contents, in that the "Notes" of which it is made up are from the unpublished manuscripts left by Channing. They have been carefully gathered, and are here given without revision or change of any kind. The desire to preserve their integrity has resulted in the retention of the incomplete sentences and abrupt constructions of the original, which were written for purposes of personal reference. This is more than atoned for, however, in the vigor and freedom of expression, and the entire absence of self-restraint, which bring one into closer touch with the characteristics of Channing's thought and character. The Notes are not at all theological in character or treatment, and for that reason they present in this form another and broader view of Channing himself.

PRAYERS

By Theodore Parker. With a Preface by Louisa M. Alcott, and a Memoir by F. B. Sanborn

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 218; price, 75 cents *net;* postage, 7 cents.

"IT is in the very spirit of devotion, the gentle or the martial, that these prayers were conceived and uttered. Like so many of his predecessors in the New England pulpit, Theodore Parker was 'mighty in prayer.' It was the natural language of his soul."—*Mr. Sanborn, in his* MEMOIR.

"Parker's prayers were one of the strongest attractions of his church, and did much to win and soften souls, after his unsparing hand had torn away the veil behind which so many hide even from themselves. Like spring rains on newly plowed fields, came mercy after justice. . . . Perhaps the secret of the worth and beauty of these prayers lies in the fact that his life illustrated them so truly that those who knew him felt he had a right to pray."—*Miss Alcott, in the* PREFACE.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 Beacon Street Boston

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 96]

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY

BY

CHARLES G. AMES, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
BOSTON

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

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UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

What is the central and distinguishing thing in Christianity, or that which makes it differ from other religions? I find its essence in the emphasis it places on man's spiritual kinship to God, and in its simple reliance on the power of divine truth and love to produce in man a character worthy of that kinship. It is the religion of nature and reason better understood, loftily taught and illustrated in a personality, vitalized by the original creative force which we call the Holy Spirit, and continuously transmitted from soul to soul and from age to age.

Christianity comes to me as a deepening and expansion of the light that lighteth every man. If it did not hold much in common with all other religions, if it were a contradiction or blinding of reason, it could have no place in our human world. Taken out of doors, on the mount or by the lake, it is commended to us by its vivid naturalness; it recalls us to the simplicity of the little child, yet opens to us the infinite heavens of wisdom, and puts all the forces and faculties of life in upward motion, simply by addressing us as children of the All-Perfect.

We are partakers of the divine nature; we are children and heirs of God! Is there a higher conceivable interpretation to human life and destiny? Are there higher possible motives, or completer helps to realize that life and destiny? Here shines the light which shows a clear upward path for all humanity. Here glows the love which

overcomes evil with good and allies humanity in spirit and purpose with divinity. Here is disclosed in our souls the only life which is worthy to be immortal; *it is the life of sonship.* Here is the reason of reason, the root of ethics, the secret of order and power, of beauty and joy.

Because this gives the highest conceivable interpretation to human life and destiny, along with the highest motives and completest helps to realize that life and destiny, I must regard pure Christianity — apart from its transient elements and perversions — as not only superior to all other forms of religion, but as inclusive of whatever good they contain, and as competent to take up into itself every measure of truth and excellence which is yet to be given to humanity. I can conceive of no religion higher than that which makes us heirs of all things, and which promotes our endless growth toward the perfection of God.

When I first came among the people called Unitarians, I was naturally interested in finding out wherein they differed from other bodies of Christians. I soon saw that they regarded it as a task laid upon them to recover the religion of Jesus from its corruptions, to distinguish between its transient forms and its enduring life, and to exalt the spirit above the letter. It interested me that James Freeman Clarke had formed a church for the "study and practise of Christianity;" and in the constitution of the American Unitarian Association I read that its object was "to diffuse the knowledge and to promote the interests of pure Christianity," though every one seemed left perfectly free to define Christianity for himself. Such facts showed the general direction of the movement, but it did not appear that anybody had thought the matter out to full and final conclusions. Some of them seemed brave; others seemed timid. I could see that the timid ones were afraid of going faster than they could be sure

of the road; so that I respected their conservative caution. The movement itself seemed greater than the men; and the meaning of it greater than the words they used.

Another thing gradually became clear: when they used the word Christianity, they did not generally mean a doctrinal system, nor an organized church, — they meant the life of Jesus, the life of sonship to God, continued in the life of humanity; and some of them saw, as Saint Paul and Saint Augustine saw, that his kind of spiritual life was always in the world and was older than the name. Without doing violence to language, and without straining the facts of history, they could properly speak of the inner spirit of Christianity as the absolute and universal religion, appearing in its most exalted form under the inspired and inspiring leadership of the greatest of all the prophets and foremost of all the sons of God. Some of the most honest and earnest men among them were saying, "We must get outside of Christianity in order to reach the truth which Jesus did not teach, and to practise the good he did not enjoin." But others said, "Christianity has no outside; the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of free progress; in that name we can go on toward perfection forever. Christianity is not bondage and limitation; it is free religion, taking up into itself whatsoever things are true and venerable, pure and just, lovely and of good report, wherever found." Words and names are not things to stickle for, yet they prove mightily convenient as signs and vehicles of the spirit. But the clearest thinking does not stop at words or names; it penetrates to the realities which no language can adequately represent.

With this large interpretation, there was no need to drop the Christian name; but there was need to charge it with higher and nobler meaning. There was no need to

withhold fellowship from good men who did drop the name; they were Christian in our sense, if not in their own sense. There was no need even to repel an honest and true man who called himself an atheist; for in living by the highest law he, too, was proved a child of God, even though he could not speak his Father's name.

We can therefore unite with the Association in promoting the interests of "pure Christianity" without narrowness, without proscribing anybody, and without making it a matter of fine-spun definitions. The true business is to bring as many people as possible under the influence of wisdom and goodness. All Unitarians could respond heartily to a saying of Dean Stanley: "Nothing greatly concerns us except that we become wiser and better; and that we should become wiser and better is just what Christianity intends."

A few months before his death, I had a happy conversation with Phillips Brooks. We found ourselves entirely agreed on this point: That Christianity was a free, open, unstereotyped, world-wide movement, large enough to take in every advance of light and every good thing that is yet to come to the world; and we also agreed that if Christianity could not fairly bear this inclusive construction, we should both be obliged to go outside, in order to be true to ourselves, to our fellow-men, and to God. From portions of his sermons preached more than a dozen years ago, I know that Phillips Brooks recognized the true Christ in pure-minded pagans who never heard the gospel, even as Peter learned from a vision that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

We belong to the Church of Christ as we belong to the republic of Washington and Lincoln, and are as little trammelled by the first form of Christian teaching as by the utterances and actions of these great patriots and

statesmen. Our liberty is not impaired or restricted, but preserved and extended, by the inspiring name of Jesus. In that name we resent and resist all forms of spiritual servility, and all impositions of authority which would bid us call any man master. In emancipating mankind from every yoke save the yoke of truth and goodness, he simply bids us share with himself that higher liberty of the sons of God which is the proper birthright of all souls. Under any lower interpretation, Christianity brings bondage rather than deliverance, and Jesus adds one more name to the long list of spiritual tyrants.

Did humanity in Jesus rise to the conscious dignity of sonship, or did divinity descend in fatherly love to draw humanity upward? As well ask whether the flower rises to meet the sun, or the sun descends to meet the flower. Enough for us is the union of the human and the divine; enough for us is the doctrine of Immanuel, or "God with us," which Jesus has both taught and illustrated as the natural order of life for all men.

In accepting Jesus as the captain of salvation for all the world, or as the spiritual leader of all we can do or wish to do for the higher welfare of mankind, we simply avail ourselves of a great historic impulse, — an impulse to the natural religious sentiment as vast and vague, and quite as real, as the alphabet or the printing-press has given to the growth of language and literature. We do not separate from the best faith of the Christian world, but we seek to put ourselves in the very middle of that stream of power which has flowed down the ages, and in sympathy with that great human heart which broke on Calvary for love of all souls.

I am not here attempting a complete definition of Christianity or of Unitarianism; but it has seemed worth while to show that the central and vital truth of the

former is precisely the truth which is central and vital to the latter, — that if Christianity is an orderly outcome of Nature and a free movement of spiritual or divine forces in humanity, Unitarianism is simply a free movement of the same kind and in the same direction. Much that goes under the Christian name must be winnowed out and blown away; and the same thing is true of much that goes under the Unitarian name. But the only way to get rid of folly, error, and evil is to let the *life principle* have free course in our hearts and in our churches.

I do not claim for the Unitarians superior intelligence or superior virtue; I do not claim that we have a body of final and verified truth which is destined to displace all other ways of thinking; nor do I claim that the ultimate object of our activity differs greatly from that of other churches and people. We unite with them in the prayer that God's kingdom may come and that his will may be done.

I do not stand here to say that others are all wrong, or that we are all right. The sober fact is that neither they nor we are very wise or very good.

But I do claim one great advantage in our method of dealing with this whole matter of religion: ours is the method of freedom. We have conquered the right of self-correction and improvement, both in our beliefs and in our practices. In theory at least, every member of our churches is as free, in spirit and in conduct, to obey the inward monitor as if no such churches existed. There is nothing in our principles, nothing in our organization — would to God there were nothing in our hearts! — to prevent our instant and joyful response to any good thing that may be or has been said or done in our own time or in foregoing ages. No pressure is upon us to believe or disbelieve, to do or to refrain from doing, except as every one may be fully persuaded in his own

mind. We have no cause for being distracted about a revision of our creed, for every soul of us silently modifies his ways of thinking as the light enters to show him the truth more clearly.

In this freedom we have really found our unity; for we have moved, amid many differences, toward essential agreement. We need spend no force in resisting or disparaging reason or science, nature or man. We accept all the appointments of the world as divine provisions for education. We find it easy to believe in yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, without worshipping the god Antiquity or the god Novelty. We have no fear that the true God will contradict himself, if he shall speak again and again; and we are ready to identify the Word incarnate in humanity with the silent Logos of creation. We have the least possible partisan or ecclesiastical interest to defend; we covet to be what Dr. Bellows called us, "the unsectarian sect." We are tempted by no powerful bribe of property or standing, and by no silly dread of inconsistency, to put the product of the new vintage into old wine-skins, nor to pretend that we steer our ship by calculations based on old almanacs. We can afford to learn from Rome or England or from our neighbors; we can afford to profit by criticism, and to mend our manners, our methods, or our principles, with no undue tenderness toward our own errors, follies, or faults.

If these are indeed spiritual advantages, they are all due to the free method, which permits a free movement of free souls in a free church. If we do not live up to it, that is not the fault of the method. But as it is good for us, we believe it would be good for many others, who for want of such a free method and generous fellowship are living in spiritual solitude and sadness.

My view of the present religious situation and of our duty is this: In nearly every city and village, and scat-

tered through all the rural regions, are many tens of thousands of men and women who are not reached, and for various reasons cannot be reached in their deepest nature and need, by the religious influences which proceed from the Romish Church or from the so-called Evangelical preachers, but who can be reached and helped by a more free and rational religious appeal. Without saying one word in criticism, and with hearty recognition of what others are doing, I think we may agree that here is the place and the part assigned to the Unitarians in the wide field of religious work.

Is it worth while for Unitarians to keep up a separate organization, and to plant more churches of their own kind in this country, or anywhere else? There are some who doubt it, — some who say that our mission is substantially accomplished, that the progress of free inquiry and the spirit of wider fellowship have brought the older and larger churches into such a degree of harmony with the higher and more rational interpretation of Christianity that we may now safely be mustered out of separate service.

For my part, I would gladly take this view, if it were true. It is a life-trial and a settled grief to be outside the great warm fellowship of Christendom, and to be obliged to protest against the creeds which are taught in the name of the Lord. Multitudes are rejoicing over the softening of the old sectarian animosities and the approach of all the churches toward harmony and good feeling; but we are still very far from being of one fold and one shepherd. Quite as serious is the fact that the great body, the vast majority, of the hundred thousand pulpits in our country are obliged, either by conviction, by the pressure of opinion, or by church standards, to restrict their religious instruction, not within the limits of known truth, but within the limits of what was believed to

be true in former centuries. The Spirit which leads into all truth cannot find full utterance in the pulpit, nor full welcome in the pew, without a breach of ecclesiastical order and a rupture of fellowships. I believe, therefore, that the time has not come when we can safely cease to testify for the full liberty of the sons of God and the right and duty of independent thinking in matters of religion. Every live Unitarian church we can establish will become an object-lesson to the community, illustrating the possibility and holy beauty of uniting "freedom, fellowship, and character in religion."

There is another reason for the planting of Liberal churches, if indeed they shall be composed of faithful people. From two directions, in recent years, clouds have been gathering to darken the intelligence of multitudes. The very fact that every creed is under challenge has made many ministers and people quite willing to evade the questions which the Spirit of Truth is pressing upon the modern mind. In one direction there has been a rapid growth of unenlightened religious sentimentality, which makes a blind use of the Scriptures to prevent clear thinking; while another section of the church takes refuge in external observances, which multiply and multiply, till they are mistaken for religion itself. The rector in a New York church complains "that there is an overwhelming bent toward ritualism, and that thinking is discredited." It is easy to draw people to spectacular and mechanical performances; and a sad facility is afforded for admitting to the ministry men who have no special fitness for that work of religious instruction which Jesus and his apostles made the chief instrument of edification.

To claim for the Unitarian ministry a monopoly of intelligence would be ridiculous arrogance; but certainly our body, small as it is, has ever acted as a counterpoise

to the tendencies of obscurantism, fanaticism, and unthinking religiosity. As a rule, our preachers are teachers; they believe in divine wisdom; they make of every congregation a school of thoughtful people, as well as a company of worshippers; nor can we ever get far away from the idea that one *must* be thoughtful in order to worship the Father "in spirit and in truth." I think there is need of many more churches in which the people feel themselves called to meditate deeply and freely upon all things that pertain to the kingdom of God and the welfare of man. And I think the people who listened lovingly to the preacher of Galilee were put in such a state of mind that they wanted to know whatever could be learned about all things in heaven and earth.

The scope of religious instruction among us being widened so as to include all the relations of sound knowledge to good living, and the free play of public spirit being encouraged by our caring more for mankind than for the sect, our churches have produced an extraordinary number of men and women who have taken a leading part in public affairs, in education, philanthropy, and literature. Prominent Episcopalians and Presbyterians in Philadelphia — a city of five or six hundred churches — have more than once told me that the three Unitarian congregations of that city furnished a large part of the most competent and reliable supporters of every general movement for reform and improvement. The same thing is true here in Massachusetts, and it is said to be true in England. This must be set to the credit of the free method in religion.

The Unitarian kind of spiritual culture therefore tends to produce an increased activity of the human mind, and to direct that activity toward all worthy subjects of thought. We are not alone in this; but probably it is more emphasized and urged among us than by any other section of the Christian Church.

Quite in a line with this habit of appealing to the reason of mankind is the use we make of printed matter, especially through the Post Office Mission, which carries on an extensive correspondence with individual inquirers scattered through all the States and Territories. This opens the door for travelling preachers; and these prepare the ground for permanent societies.

But the progress of intelligence is opening many such doors, and the demand for preachers of a faith at once reasonable and reverent is far in advance of the supply. The newly gathered congregations have generally a small membership with small means, and they need encouragement. Some of them fail by adopting building plans that are too ambitious; some because they cannot find suitable ministers; some because the religious interest is shallow and short-lived. But some of them succeed, and become a permanent power and blessing. This mixture of failure and success in church-planting runs all the way back to the days of the apostles; and then, as now, the strong helped the weak, and the faithful contributed the means to enable the preachers to give themselves to the work. It was a work of faith and a labor of love, all around.

We are obliged to ask whether this kind of labor and outlay is not largely thrown away. Every church has to ask that question; every preacher has to ask it. For one, I always find the answer in the parable of the sower. A part of the seed fell on stony places, a part by the wayside, a part among thorns; and all this was wasted, — it came to nothing. But *some* seed fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit. Not all of this was equally fruitful; some brought forth thirty fold, some sixty, some an hundred.

It is so with our missionary work; much of it yields no adequate results. It is so with what we try to do in

our own churches and pulpits. And is it not the same in every department of activity, — in education, in charity, in business? To bring even a little to pass, we must attempt much. Theodore Parker thought that if he really reached and helped five in a thousand of his hearers, it was worth while to preach. Jesus must often have felt that only a few of the multitude understood and accepted his message; and it is likely that this parable of the sower was born of a bitter-sweet experience. The bitter part was that so many of his gracious words fell on idle ears; the sweet part was that *some* seed fell on good ground and brought forth fruit. And so he kept sowing, as his faithful followers have done ever since, with the same discouragements, the same moderate success, the same sure harvest.

We do not shut up the schools, nor abandon social reforms, nor go out of business because the results are not all we wish. In these fields of effort we simply sow more bountifully, as if to make up for the losses.

When we try to do good to mankind, the failures are often due to our own mistakes, to our lack of judgment or our lack of earnestness. Preacher-work and church-work belong to the highest form of skilled labor; but neither ministers nor parishes have wholly learned their business. And when we send new men to new fields, to win souls and build up societies, will it be strange if some false motions are made, and if some promising beginnings come to naught? Even where we succeed, will it be strange if the success is often quite moderate, and the increase even less than thirty-fold? All the more must we sow bountifully.

How often during our great war, when defeats were mingled with victories, and the victories also were gained at such frightful cost, our hearts were ready to sink! It seemed at times as if there could be no possible com-

pensation for the sacrific of so many precious lives, a sacrifice which in many cases seemed cruelly needless. The pain of it, the woe of it, is still like a shadow in many thousands of hearts and homes. But when we think what a long dark night would have set in upon this continent had the Slave-Power succeeded, who will not say that Liberty and Union are worth all they cost, worth every drop of blood so freely given, worth every pang in the hearts of mothers and wives?

Let us say the same about the setbacks and discouragements which are incident to the promotion of pure Christianity. They are very real, and often they are very sad, and in many cases they appear to be the result of human blindness and folly. But they are like eddies in a strong stream, and the stream still runs on, and is a river of divine benefits to mankind. We are the sharers of such benefits; they have come down to us from former generations, through the lives and services of men who were unwise and faulty, like ourselves, but who, like ourselves, had something besides faults, and often builded even better than they knew.

We must work on long lines, and with a wise forecast. By the end of the thirtieth century there will have lived and died in the Unites States a population four times as large as the number now living on the globe. We are not working merely for the sixty-five millions who are living here in our own time; we are called to be benefactors and ministers of grace to all those billions of people that are yet to dwell between these great oceans, — to those throngs and crowds of men and women who will never know that we have lived, but who will have human hearts and spiritual needs like our own, and whose happiness and welfare, like ours, must depend on their living here in harmony with each other and with the holy laws. And what we do, or fail to do, must affect both their physical and

social welfare, along with those higher interests which are vast as eternity.

But to work on long lines only means that we shall keep doing the best things that are now possible. That great Teacher whose heart was large enough to take in all the ages and races of men, did not lose his opportunity to talk with one poor unknown woman, chance-met by a well; he did not think it a small matter to preach to fishermen by the lake, or to go about the country villages, brightening and cheering the lives of common people. We, too, can work within narrow limits and with small means, and yet work for that which is boundless and immortal.

Even now, in America, there is a vast population "out in search of religion." Not half the people who are dwelling in this land have any settled religious faith or purpose. Not half are gathered into churches, and of those in the churches not half are walking in the light and resting in the love of God. It is not enough to collect the sheep and lambs in the fold; the Good Shepherd requires that they be properly fed.

There are millions of uninstructed and uninspired souls living in moral twilight. There are millions who have hardly been told the glad tidings that they belong to that spiritual family, in earth and heaven, of which Eternal Goodness is the head. There are populous communities where no adequate provision is made for bringing the people together in the name of the Fatherhood and the Brotherhood. Just so long as any part of the human race is thus dwelling in darkness, the children of the light must see in missionary work their holy duty and their happy privilege.

We, like our brethren of other names, are in danger of doing an inferior kind of religious work. The name Unitarianism, like the name Christianity, may be used

to cover most unspiritual and misleading teaching. Dr. Dewey thought there might be something going on under the Unitarian name for which mankind ought to have no respect, and to which they should show no favor. I think we must always be more concerned for the quality of our work than for the quantity. The mixture of tares with the wheat in the sowing means mischief in the growing and further mischief in the harvest. "The seed the sower sows grows according to its kind. *Let us sow good seed with care and liberality.*" So exhorts John Ruskin; so exhorted and so acted the prophets and apostles whose harvests the ages have been reaping.

Something can be done to enlighten and uplift mankind, and we can help do it. To a generous mind is not this enough? Let the opportunity appear, and the zeal comes of itself. All a genuine prophet needs is something to say; then he cannot keep silent. All a Christian needs is something to do; then he cannot remain idle. All a living church needs is to see an open door of usefulness, and it moves gladly to the service. Opportunity of itself is what Saint Paul would call "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That is, if we have caught the spirit and purpose of the gospel, we shall find ourselves in the company of him who "went about doing good, because God was with him!" That is, he went seeking opportunities, because his heart was full of divine love for mankind.

At the National Conference of 1884, in Saratoga, I heard James Freeman Clarke close an address with these words: "I shall not live to see it; but some day there will certainly be seen a church of the living God and the living Christ, in which earth and heaven shall be one, time and eternity blended in sweet consent. If Unitarians are faithful to the light God is sending them, they will have the blessed opportunity of bringing this king-

dom near; if not, it will be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

I believe that we, too, are looking and longing for the living church, one, Holy, Catholic, and Christian, free and clear of Romish rubbish and Protestant perversion; free of hard bigotry and irrational dogma; free of conservative stupidities and radical flippancies; gladly welcoming the yoke of the higher law and the lowly service; bringing forth out of her treasury things new and old; reconciling the truths of history with the truths of science; coupling stability with progress; blending light with love, reason with reverence, worldly activity with heavenly principles; alive with the enthusiasm of Brotherhood because inspired with the faith of the Fatherhood; and leading the nations onward to the shining Age of Gold, when there shall be none to hurt or destroy, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

May the Spirit of Truth enlighten our eyes, enlarge our hearts, and make us ready for every good word and work!

UNITARIANISM IN AMERICA

A History of its Origin and Development

By George Willis Cooke, Member of the American Historical Association, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Academy of Political and Social Science, etc.

Size, 5 3-4 x 8 1-2 inches; pages, 463; 21 full-page illustrations; price, $2.00 *net;* postage, 14 cents additional.

THE purpose of this work is to furnish a complete, impartial, and candid record of the origin and growth of American Unitarianism, with accounts of its organization, its progress, and its relation to all present-day movements for social and religious betterment, all of which is presented in "the true spirit of the historical method, without reference to local interests and without sectional preferences." Controversial treatment is thus happily avoided. The author has made long and thorough examination of original manuscripts and journals, as well as many magazines, newspapers, and printed reports of various kinds. The result has been to bring together into a single octavo volume of 475 pages much valuable material, heretofore to be found only in widely scattered sources, and a large array of facts not obtainable elsewhere. The volume is fully indexed, making all references to any one topic readily accessible. The book thus becomes a valuable reference work as well as a thoroughly readable and instructive history. It has been written with special reference to its helpfulness in explaining the Unitarian attitude and temper.

The opening chapters begin with the English Sources of American Unitarianism, followed by chapters upon the Liberal Side of Puritanism, the Growth of Democracy in the Churches, and the Silent Advance of Liberalism. Then follows the organization of the American Unitarian Association, and its various activities as the national executive organization of our churches are fully set forth. Chapters are given to the accounts of the Sunday School Society, the Boston Fraternity of Churches, the Women's National Alliance, the Post-office Mission, and other enterprises which mark the spirit of Unitarian endeavor. The relation of Unitarianism to philanthropy, reforms, education, and literature, receive special chapters of unusual interest. The closing chapter treats of the future of Unitarianism.

In addition to the text itself are twenty-one full-page half-tone portrait illustrations of prominent Unitarian leaders, including a frontispiece of Channing. These grouped pictures add not a little to the general interest of the volume.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 Beacon Street, Boston

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 97]

EXPERIENCING RELIGION.

BY

REV. SETH C. BEACH.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

EXPERIENCING RELIGION.

What is the meaning of the phrase, "to experience religion"? In the Bible the words scarcely occur, — *never* together, and less than half a dozen times separately. "Experience" occurs in the Common Version only four times from Genesis to Revelation. "Religion" occurs five times. How much more we talk about religion in these days than they did when this great text-book, commonly supposed to be the only text-book, of religion was being made!

The word "experience" is not difficult to understand. We need not go to the dictionaries or authorities. To "experience" is to feel; what we have felt we have experienced. To experience joy or sorrow is to feel joy or sorrow; and to experience religion is to feel religion.

If there is any difficulty in the phrase, it is with the word "religion"; for the meaning of experience is clear. To give an entirely satisfactory definition of religion has puzzled theologians and philosophers not a little. It has been defined as "the feeling entertained toward that infinite being, power, or cause . . . which is regarded and worshipped as the Creator and Ruler of the universe;" again as "the earnest devotion of each individual soul to the highest and best that is revealed to that soul;" still again, "as the vital relation of a part of the whole, . . .

religion demands that one shall forget himself in the whole he is a part of;" and again, very briefly, as "the union of man with God, of the finite with the Infinite," — the *sense*, realizing sense, of such union, perhaps it means. Union of finite with Infinite is not a matter of chance or of choice; it simply is, willy-nilly, religion or no religion; but the thought and feeling that a point, an atom, or a soul is part and parcel of a larger existence is a different matter. That "we are members one of another," and that "living or dying, we are the Lord's," is true any way. To feel that it is true, and to live as if we felt its truth, is religion.

It is a fault of these definitions that they do not define. The explanations need to be explained. If some one would give us a list of all the elements, — the beliefs, sentiments, and duties, — which go to make up religion in its wholeness, we should have a definition that would be worth something. There is one definition — one of the oldest, and the only one which the Bible undertakes to give — which is of this kind: "Pure religion is to visit the fatherless and widows, and to keep one's self unspotted." That is, charity and purity constitute religion. Here is a definition which, as far as it goes, is of the kind we want; but too evidently it was not intended to be complete.

Purity is religion, and charity is religion; but so are the God-ward sentiments of love and obedience. Without saying they are religion, an ancient prophet gives us a noble summary of things required: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Jesus is summing up the essential elements of religion when he says, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Perfect love to God and man, — this is religion. Saint Paul, again, sums up the eternal and unchangeable elements of religion in that

remarkable chapter upon charity, where, after saying that prophecies should fail, tongues cease, and knowledge vanish, he says, "Faith, hope, and charity shall abide, these three; and the greatest of these is charity." Greater than all else are faith and hope, and greater than faith and hope is charity.

The first element of religion is charity, — Paul's kind of charity; not pity, which we commonly mean, but love. The beginning of religion is between man and man; the end of it is between man and God. Love, then, — natural, human love, — is religion: love, which suffereth long and is kind; which seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. This love, which is needed in every household, and found, thank God, in many, is religion. Have you not seen it sometimes in a toil-worn, care-worn husband and father; sometimes in a faithful wife, a self-forgetting and devoted mother; and sometimes in a beautiful and dutiful child?

"It vaunteth not itself," — it does not call itself by great names; it does not suspect that it is religion. Like the publican, it does not lift up its eyes to heaven, but smites upon its breast, and cries, God be merciful. This lowly, humble, unpretending love is religion.

Another element of religion is purity, — purity of character and purity of life. What the apostle means by being "unspotted from the world," and the psalmist by "having truth in the inward parts," is religion. Another element is faith, — faith in God. I do not lay this down, as many would, among the duties of religion, but among its blessings. It is one of the blessed privileges of religion to trust God, to lay our burdens upon the Lord, and to make his almighty strength our refuge.

Another element is obedience, — childlike obedience to the Divine will, however made known. Here we come

again upon duties. To do what we believe the Lord requires is a duty; and it fills out all that is left of religion, and completes the definition. Love, purity, faith, obedience, — these are religion.

What, then, is it to experience religion? It is to love, to live unspotted, to have faith, and to obey God. Whoever has felt a sincere and disinterested love has experienced religion. Whoever has resisted a temptation to sully the purity of his soul has experienced religion. Whoever has gone to his labor trusting that as the flowers of the field are clothed, and the birds of the air are fed, he and his shall likewise be clothed and fed, has experienced religion. And, finally, whoever has done a duty because it was a duty has experienced religion.

Have you, friends, ever experienced any of this religion? Alas for you, if you have not all experienced it!

Let us consider some of the conditions of this experience. In the first place it is real. It is a fact of the inward life. There is a widespread opinion that religious experience is something that hardly belongs to this world, being, as it were, a kind of strange and mysterious opening of the soul to things lying quite beyond the conditions of ordinary mortal life. This account of the matter gives every one the impression that religious experience is quite unlike ordinary human experience, that it belongs to some peculiar state of mind beyond the natural, and that it may, after all, be something imaginary and unreal. Even the best assured have confessed to moments when they have been haunted with doubts of the reality of their religious experience, upon which they had rested their hopes. The real trouble with them is that they have mistaken the nature of religious experience. It is not the experience of something strange, weird, and unnatural, but of something very human, and thank God, very common. It is an experience of love, purity, faith, and obedience. These

are solid facts of every-day human life, about which there is nothing imaginary or unreal.

Nor is there anything uncertain or obscure about this experience. If any one has ever experienced religion, he knows it. A man can have no doubt whether he loves or hates, whether his life is pure or foul, whether his spirit is trustful or despairing, whether he has done what seemed to him to be duty or what he knew was not. If you have had any experience of religion, it is a very plain matter.

I imagine that all will agree with what I have been saying. But it is very important that we remember what our words mean to us, and that we adhere to our meanings. It is a favorite saying of Unitarians, and perhaps Universalists, that they "have no religion to speak of." That is very well, if they mean that they are modest about putting forth great personal claims to those blessed fruits of the spirit, — "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." But if they could mean that religion, as they understand it, is a matter with which they have very little interest or concern, it surely would be very bad and very sad. This, of course, is not what they mean to say; still the phrase is unfortunate. Do not use it. Do not say you have "little religion to speak of." Know what religion means to you, and then think of it a good deal, speak of it directly or indirectly whenever the word in season will do good, and practise it always.

It was a bad answer my friend made when some one said, "You can do that; you are a religious person." The answer was, "Oh, no, I am not; I am not a religious person." Nine out of ten of us would have made that answer, but it was bad. It was either saying, "I do not love, I am not pure, I have no faith, I obey no law," or else it was accepting a definition of religion which is current, to be sure, but which we do not believe in at all.

No; let us say, "We are unprofitable servants, unfaithful stewards, miserable sinners," if you please; but let us not say, and let it not be true, that we are not "religious persons," — not, at least, trying to be such.

Let us never forget, then, that there is such a thing as religious experience; that it is real, that it can be felt and known, and that it is made up of the most precious elements of our spiritual history.

In the second place, a true religious experience is capable of infinite enlargement and of an eternal progress. There are heights and depths in religion to reach which this present life is all too short and eternity is none too long. Between the rudimentary germ of moral life with which the soul begins and the perfected state toward which it slowly moves, the difference is plainly immeasurable.

Between the poor, dumb brute and man with his awakened soul there is a chasm which we are sometimes told no development can bridge; but that chasm is as nothing compared to the infinite difference between the rudimentary man and the perfect soul. Well may the apostle say, "We know not what we shall be;" well may he say, "It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath in store." Nothing which has ever been said of the possible riches and glories of a real, true, deep religious experience has been exaggerated, or, indeed, can be, though it may easily pass into the region of unintelligible and unmeaning speech.

The prospect of this destiny, which passeth understanding and beggars speech, has always been humbling to the religious mind. Its language has been, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us," it exclaims, "but unto thy name give glory." It is a true instinct. Surely if in his religious moments man did not and does not recognize the presence and the providence of God, when would he?

The old theology is entirely right in saying that the possibility of religious experience and all that comes of it are the free gift of God. The Calvinist is entirely right when he says that it is wholly by the "grace of God" he is what he is. It is as true of his body as of his soul, of his natural life as of his spiritual, of his practical as of his religious experience.

Doubtless he should remember that it is by the "grace of God" he is anything, — that he is a man, a citizen, a mechanic, a millionnaire. But if he forgets all these, let him at least remember that it is by the "grace of God" he is not a heathen or an infidel, and has open before him the possibilities of an ever-growing and enlarging religious experience.

Finally, religion is experienced, so to speak, in instalments, — a little at a time. As it is written, "first the blade, then the ear, then the ripe corn in the ear;" or again it is like the mustard-seed and the leaven, becoming great, though beginning small. It is common to speak of the first step in religious experience as "conversion," as "a change of heart." But why more of the first step than of the second? The fact is that a growing religious experience is a perpetual conversion, or change of heart. There are few who are not profoundly conscious of that need; and the purer and sweeter their souls, not the greater the need, but the keener the sensibility of need.

Remember it was one who knew his own heart who said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God." Remember, again, who it was, with faith for the moment as weak as ours, who cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet all of us have some faith, or we could not live. No one is wholly bad; and every child knows what it is to love.

All of us have so far a genuine experience of religion. It ought to be a perpetually fresh experience, a steadily

growing experience, and a continually repeated experience. The religion you have experienced to-day, — the love, purity, faith, obedience you have experienced to-day, — you need to experience again to-morrow. This, and more. A religious experience which is impossible to-day you reach easily to-morrow.

To-day you have faith; but perhaps in virtue (moral fibre) you are weak. To-morrow adds to your faith virtue, but does not bring knowledge. Then you add to virtue knowledge, but lack moderation and self-control. Then you add to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

To experience religion is like ascending a mountain whose lofty summit is among the clouds. Farms and villages are upon its gentle slopes, which shade almost imperceptibly into the plain below. Here runs the common road of business and travel, and you seem to be still upon the plain. Then you come upon a sudden swell in the mountain-side, and turn to look at the prospect from its elevation. Lo, what a change! Far beneath you in the valley lie the villages and farms; and the populous plain stretches before you to the right and left till it is lost in the distance. You seem never to have seen the world before. You go on again, following now a winding path, and presently climb a steep spur of the mountain or an overhanging rock; again the prospect changes, and the world seems new.

So it is in experiencing religion. The experience is long and toilsome and slow. But now and then — very often, if we will — there comes a day never to be forgotten, — a day when, as it were, we seem to have been lifted up into another air, where all the faith, virtue, and knowledge that the trial and discipline of life have brought us break upon us all at once. Then it seems to us we have never

known what faith, virtue, and knowledge were before, and have never experienced religion before. But again comes, or may come, just such another memorable day, which lifts us to a higher level; and to our faith, virtue, and knowledge we find we have added patience, godliness, and charity. Then we seem to have experienced religion again. And so we have; and so, if we will, we may again and again to the end.

Let us so live as, like the Master, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth from day to day, that our experience of religion may be a fact of our every-day life, continually repeated and renewed, enlarging and deepening from stage to stage.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 98]

THE

FAITH OF A FREE CHURCH.

BY

SAMUEL M. CROTHERS, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christanity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE

FAITH OF A FREE CHURCH.

THE CENTRE OF FAITH.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." — 1 Thess. v. 21.

That a great change has taken place in the relations between the Church and the thinking world is evident to the most superficial observer. The real character of the change is not so widely appreciated.

In a general way it is felt that Church doctrine needs to be broadened and rationalized. Much learning has been expended in the attempt to reconcile science and religion. By this is often meant harmonizing certain generally accepted ecclesiastical dogmas with the results of scientific investigation. Of such a character are the attempts to read into the Book of Genesis the facts of geology, or to state the doctrine of regeneration in terms of biology.

Leaving the restricted sphere of Biblical theology, there are still greater subjects where the science of the day seems to challenge the beliefs of natural and universal religion. How to reconcile the doctrine of evolution with that of Divine Providence; how to reconcile what is known of the influence of heredity and environment in moulding character with the sense of personal responsibility to which religion appeals; how to reconcile what we know of the origin of man with what we hope in regard to his destiny, — these are important questions. And yet

the main question lies back of them all. If science meant simply a body of formulated fact which will always remain as it is, the Church could easily incorporate it into its body of divinity, and place upon it the stamp of infallibility. But both science and religion are forces, and each has its own laws and conditions. The underlying question is not one about transient results, but about processes and tendencies. Can the scientific temper and method exist harmoniously, in the same mind, with the religious temper and method?

This is a question not of scholarship, but of experience. It touches the point, not whether this or that religious doctrine shall survive, but whether religion and free investigation can breathe the same atmosphere. If they cannot, then a rational religion is impossible. And if there is to be a truly liberal church, one that is to be permanent, it must not simply proclaim what for the time may be considered rational thought, but it must allow room for continuous intellectual advance, while at the same time satisfying the religious nature.

That this is no easy thing we may be sure. Let us see what we mean by the religious temper and method, and what we mean by the scientific, or, if you will, the rationalistic, temper and method.

In order to get a glimpse of the working of a purely religious mind, one into whose monastic calm and ascetic purity the doubts of our modern time had never entered, let us go back to the ages of faith.

Thomas à Kempis writes thus in his "Imitation of Christ": "By two wings is a man lifted from things earthly, — by simplicity and purity. If thy heart be sincere, every creature will be to thee a looking-glass and a book of holy doctrine. Such as every one is inwardly, so he judgeth outwardly. If thou wert inwardly good, then thou wouldst understand all things. There is no other

way of life but the way of the holy cross, — the way of daily self-sacrifice. Why art thou so much inclined to outward things, so negligent of things inward and spiritual?"

Here we have the purely religious method of attaining truth. In no soul had the words of Jesus, "The pure in heart shall see God," been realized with such intensity as in this man who for seventy years verified the beatitudes in the monastery of Mount St. Agnes.

"If thou wert inwardly good, thou wouldst understand all things." Spiritual goodness is made the sole discoverer and judge of truth. The world that is rounded out in the soul of Saint Agnes, or mirrored in the calm, uplifted eyes of the Madonna, is the true world, God's world; all else is vanity. "Hold fast that which is good," — that is the whole of duty. The intellect has no function apart from the conscience. Its longing to prove all things, to know the evil as the good, its insatiable curiosity about outward things, must be repressed. It must learn to walk, with downcast eyes, "along the way of the holy cross."

But while the mystic, whose soft brown eyes took note only of the quiet world within the convent gates, was living a life hidden with Christ in God, men were awaking to the many-sidedness of the world that lay outside. John Huss was attacking the doctrines of the Church in Bohemia; rival popes were anathematizing each other from Rome and Avignon; the old Roman Empire was in its death grapple with the Turks under the walls of Constantinople; gunpowder was destroying feudalism, and making possible a new political order; the mariner's compass was guiding men on long voyages, and making possible the discovery of new worlds; the printing-press was diffusing everywhere the knowledge of good and evil; and revolution with flaming sword was driving men out of the old paradise of ignorance.

"Hold fast that which is good," said the sweet, pure voice from the monastery. "Hold fast the old sanctities. It is good to pray; it is good to renounce one's self, and in renunciation to find the peace of God." And from without came a thousand voices, — the voices of unrest, of new ambitions, of a strange sense of youth and power and daring, — the voice of the modern world breaking in on the quiet of the ages of implicit faith.

The worship of the good had never been preached more powerfully than in those ages, — goodness austere and alone, the goodness that renounced the world, crucified self, became blind to earthly beauty. But now, instead of this pure unity of the worship of the good, the old Greek trinity was revived; men would worship not the good alone, but also the true and the beautiful.

And with awakening thought the old baffling question, which had been silenced so long by fasting and prayer, came back, What is truth?

The world cried to the monastery, "Hold fast," if you can, "that which is good;" a more inspiring, a more strenuous task is ours, to "prove all things." Be yours the simplicities of piety; ours must be the bewilderments of discovery, the contradictions of freedom, the exhilaration of broadening horizons.

"Prove all things." That is the voice of the modern world, the watchword of its discoverers, its reformers, its revolutionists. All questions are open questions, says the scientific spirit; nothing is too holy to escape our analysis; we hold nothing to be so sacred that it shall not be put to the test. A new set of virtues is added to the calendar, — impartiality, open-mindedness, clear-sightedness, breadth of mind, and tolerance. One of our philanthropists uses the expression, "a rationalistic regeneration." The phrase is a telling one. Ye must be born again into reasonableness, as men have been born into faith.

Here are two distinct attitudes of the individual, — the one that of a simple, trustful piety, and the other the attitude of cool, impartial investigation. The one looks within, — meditates, examines its motives, distrusts its own will, but believes implicitly in the power of self-renouncing love. The other looks out, and not in, — studies the external world, traces its far-reaching laws, detaches itself from all preconceptions and prejudices, that it may be open to all facts. One spirit leads to writing the "Imitation of Christ;" the other, to the "Origin of Species" and the "Descent of Man."

The problem of religion in modern life is to unite these two impulses, — to wed the impartial intellect that dares to put all things to the test to the steadfast heart that holds fast to that which is good.

This is not an easy thing. "My heart is fixed, O God, — my heart is fixed;" that is the voice of religion. "Cast thy burden on the Lord. He will not suffer the righteous to be moved." It is no accident that makes the believer choose the rock, the fortress, the mountain, as his dearest symbols. Zeal, consecration, devotion, — these are not kindled by a vague "perhaps;" they demand the absolute and eternal. The martyr at the stake could better understand his persecutor, than he could the tolerant spectator who should treat his faith as an interesting hypothesis. The faith that overcomes the world is not something to be discussed, but something to be obeyed.

But the truth-seeker demands that the mind shall not be fixed; it shall be able to detach itself from its own opinions, and to look at them, and analyze, and criticise them. "Hold fast your beliefs," says one. "Do not grasp them too firmly," says the other; "touch them lightly; hold them tentatively; be ready to let them go when something better is within reach."

The fixed heart with its fidelities and the inquiring mind

with its questionings are not easily harmonized; and yet only in their harmony lies the possibility of a rational religion. And how shall that be accomplished? Not by any mere compromise, in which each is minimized into harmlessness. This is the weakness of mere latitudinarianism. It satisfies neither the intellectual nor the religious nature.

When a question of divided allegiance came before Jesus, he answered, "Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." So we say, Let the steadfast heart have what belongs to it, and let the inquiring mind have what belongs to it. Each has its own method, which must be obeyed. One seeks to trace the ever-widening circles which define our knowledge of the world; the other fixes itself on the goodness which it finds at the centre. We discover and define facts by the method of science; we must doubt, analyze, test all things. But how do we know goodness? Not by such long processes, but by the direct judgment of our consciences. Something within us gives the verdict, and its validity depends upon the state of our own hearts. "Such as a man is inwardly, so he judgeth outwardly. If thou wert inwardly good, thou wouldst understand."

Here is a kind of knowledge different from mere intellectual acuteness. It may be "hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes." It does not depend upon the analytic processes of science; it cannot detach itself from its object, and coolly criticise. To know goodness is to love it, to lose oneself in it, and to make it one's own. So the Christian apostle says that he only who loves God, knows God. Religion becomes rational, not by allowing this power of passionate attachment to cool, but by directing it to its proper object. "Hold fast that which is *good;*" but "take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege," and let not your loyalty be a shelter to

falsehood, or sanctify a mass of things indifferent. Confusion comes when religious emotion fixes itself on things not essentially religious.

Church organization is apt to add to this confusion by multiplying the non-religious elements. Questions of history, politics, philosophy, literature, even of taste, become associated in the minds of the worshippers with their most sacred emotions and deepest faith.

> "Even as the trees
> That whisper 'round a temple become soon
> Dear as the temple's self."

A sacred enclosure is formed, within which doctrines and customs are guarded with pious vigilance. Within its boundary the methods of impartial criticism are resented as sacrilege. This right of sanctuary, which protects in the Church opinions outlawed by the courts of secular reason, is a source of great abuse. Every year the right is more frequently denied, and the vagabonds of the intellectual world who can give no satisfactory account of themselves are held for trial "without benefit of clergy."

In the chapters which follow I endeavor to indicate the attitude of the Unitarian church toward some of the great faiths of Christendom. This church has never laid any claim to those ecclesiastical privileges of which I have spoken. It has held that religion needs no other defence than "the armor of light." It recognizes that intellectual questions must necessarily arise in all discussions of religion; but it teaches respect for the slow and cautious methods by which intellectual truth is discovered and verified. It respects the suspense of judgment which the serious thinker demands; but it teaches that this suspense of judgment need not imply an eclipse of faith. For our deepest faith rests not on an opinion to be inves-

tigated, but on a goodness which has been experienced. Our first effort should be to fix our hearts on a centre of goodness, and then we may leave our minds free to enlarge the circle of knowledge.

OUR FAITH IN CHRIST.

Nowhere does the contrast between the attitude of Christian love and that of rationalistic investigation appear more sharply defined than in questions in regard to the life and nature of Jesus.

One who has felt the meaning of the words, "The love of Christ constraineth me," shrinks from the historical critic as from one who would crucify his Lord afresh; and yet connected with the origin of Christianity there are many questions which are purely historical, — questions of fact which demand each to be considered on its own merits. But the believer is not willing to consider each on its own merits. Is the testimony for the raising of Lazarus conclusive? Can we be certain as to the authorship of the Fourth Gospel? Before these questions can be submitted to unbiased investigation, the whole pressure of a mighty emotion is brought to bear.

If Jesus did not perform miracles, what sanction have we for his teaching? If he is not very God of very God, then the goodness, the grace, the hope, the self-sacrifice of these Christian centuries have been in vain. You cannot judge here as you would judge of other things. All that you love, all that you live for, hangs trembling in the balance.

And so the believer, called to weigh evidence, breaks forth instead into the passionate Litany: "From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart and contempt of thy word and commandments, Good Lord,

deliver us. By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial, by thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, Good Lord, deliver us. O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."

Shall the Litany, with its appeal to sacred passion, be forever silenced, while we listen only to the verdict of a cold, judicial rationalism?

There is a voice of reason that is not cold. It says, "Hold fast that which is good." You cannot hold it too closely; only see to it that your vision is single, that your emotion goes straight to its mark, and finds the essential goodness which justifies its love. Read the Gospels again. Find what it is that makes your heart burn within you as you hear the story of all those things that happened in Jerusalem. What is it that attracts you, grows upon you, builds up within you a new life?

You have asked, Who shall show us any good? And the answer has come in a marvellous life. Whatever else is true, this, you say, is good. The patient toil in Nazareth, the temptations nobly overcome, the loving insight which made Nature one divine parable, the days of self-forgetting labor, the nights of prayer, the hope, the patience, the lowly wisdom, the final victory of the cross, — all these are good.

Once finding this centre of goodness, you are ready to investigate questions of theory and fact. This vision of transcendent grace is one which once seen will ever command your loyalty.

But where and how was this goodness manifested?

One says, The goodness which has enthralled you is the goodness of God miraculously manifested in flesh. "If this is so," you say, "with gladness I bow down and cry, My Lord and my God. It needs no further argument to

prove that God is good. Only I must hold fast to the centre of my devotion. The goodness I adore is not more real on the throne of the universe than it was in the carpenter shop of Nazareth. Here lay the emphasis of the Gospels. He that recognizes the power of goodness in the lowliest human form, he who has given a cup of cold water in its name, has done it unto the Highest."

But another says, "You are mistaken. The goodness you adore was not that of an incarnate God; it was the fair blossoming of humanity. A man like ourselves, ignorant of many things, limited in many ways, yet loving all things, enduring all things, hoping all things, has wrought 'with human hands the creed of creeds.'"

Here is something which you must consider. If this is true, there must be a readjustment of your thought. Yet the central power holds firm; the same love constrains you. All that compelled love still compels it; and out of the love of this man springs a great hope for all men. What he was we also may become, if we follow him. And a great faith in God surges back again into the heart. He was not very God of very God; but now that we have known him, we can never again believe that God is less loving nor less near to us than the image which we have seen mirrored in that pure heart. As we cry, "Our Brother!" a sudden stillness comes, and we join with him as he teaches us to pray, "Our Father."

But still the critical voice says, "Even this is open to question. Eighteen centuries have passed since Jesus lived. He who looks through ages looks through mists. We cannot be certain of those figures which loom so vast on the horizon's edge. We still have to consider how much is history, and how much is the work of loving imagination. There are those who in the Christ you love see not one well-defined historic personage, but the growing ideal of these Christian centuries."

Again must come questionings.

The mind must obey its laws; it must be prepared to prove all things, and to listen to all evidence; it must be willing to suspend judgment till it has investigated the facts.

For myself, I believe that the glimpses we have of the historic Jesus justify the spiritual ideal we have formed of him; but this belief must be founded on historic evidence. The faith of the soul in goodness is independent of this. It need not waver in its fidelity; it need not tremble lest impartial history should destroy what it loved.

If the story of the "highest, holiest manhood" is not history, then it is prophecy. Patiently let us wait, faithfully let us labor for its fulfilment. It shall be a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts. "Still the soul sees the perfect, which the eyes seek in vain." We need not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine, and yet we need not fear to allow the winds full play. There is a Christian faith which is serene and free. It is like a perfect day.

> "When the genius of God doth flow,
> The wind may alter twenty ways,
> But a tempest cannot blow."

He who has given himself in full loyalty to the Christ-like life, finds something remaining steadfast through all intellectual change. Something, he says, I have found supremely good. If it is manifested in an incarnate God, I will worship Him; if it is manifested in one man, him will I follow; if it is manifested in a growing ideal of the race, I will give myself to that ideal, and seek to realize it. But whether in God, or man, or growing ideal, whether realized in time past, or hoped for in time to come, in whatever height of Deity it is, in whatever depth of suffering humanity, on it my heart is fixed.

OUR FAITH IN GOD.

"That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." — 3 JOHN, 8.

I HAVE been often asked, What is the doctrine of your church concerning God? And I have found the answer difficult, because the question implies a false attitude and expectation. It is implied that a doctrine concerning God is the property of a church, and to be received on some ecclesiastical authority. "Show me your conception of Deity," it is said in effect, "and if it pleases me, I will accept it and worship with you."

Now, the first thing that needs to be said in reply, is that it is of very slight importance what definition any church makes. "The workman made it, therefore it is not God," is the argument of the prophet against idolatry. It is as conclusive against the idols made out of phrases as against those hewn out of stone. It is not the function of the church to furnish you with definite conceptions of Deity, or even with proofs of his existence. It does not exist that it may dictate to you what you shall believe, but that it may provide you with fellow-helpers to the truth.

If one should ask, what is your doctrine concerning sunshine, I could only say that we believe it is a good thing, and we try to get as much of it as we can. We have no means of manufacturing it, nor any esoteric teaching in regard to it. We are helpers to our neighbors when we persuade them to open their doors and windows, and to tear down some of the blank walls that shut it out. We have done a real service if we have shown them how a house may be built free from damp and gloom, and open on every side to the blessed life-giving rays.

So a liberal church need not be ashamed if, to many, its work seems largely negative and destructive. It is help-

ing to the truth when it tears down false conceptions which obscure the truth. It is making it possible for men to love God, when it makes it impossible for them to believe in a God of hate and anger. To multitudes the belief in God is a needlessly difficult thing. It means to believe in all the ideas current among Jewish teachers in regard to Jehovah, even when they describe him as angry, jealous, and revengeful. It means to believe in a God who, in order to fulfil his eternal purpose, must break his eternal laws. It means a belief in the metaphysical puzzle of the Trinity, and in the ethical enigma of the atonement. And still more difficult is the faith made when it is conceived of, not as the unconstrained recognition of evident truth, but as itself a magic charm to ward off the wrath of God, which will be visited on all who do not rightly believe in him.

We do good service when we break down these walls of darkness, sacred though they may seem to many. Faith in God does not depend on these things. In its essence it is the most simple thing in the world, in its growth the most natural. It is not an ecclesiastical manufacture, but a vital process, — our lives coming into contact with the eternal life. Come away, we say, from the gloomy council chambers where churchmen are formulating the faith which unless a man hold entire, he shall perish everlastingly. Come out into the common light of day, where men are facing reality and learning by experience.

What do they testify who have lived most nobly? What have the pure in heart seen? What filial confidence has come to the peacemakers? How have they been satisfied, who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness? What has the strong man discovered —

> "Who on with toil of heart and knees and hands,
> Through the long gorge to the far light has won
> His way upward and prevailed"?

This is the kind of testimony that we long to hear. It does not establish the metes and bounds of the Divine nature, but it assures us of a Divine reality in the universe. Those who have reached the heights of human goodness have recognized the existence of something higher and better than themselves. As the enlightened eye sees no bounds to space, so the enlightened conscience sees no limitation to righteousness. Those who have loved most deeply have been most certain of love eternal answering to their own. Human goodness recognizes a Divine goodness.

> "Do I task any faculty highest to image success,
> I but open my eyes, and perfection, no more and no less,
> In the kind I imagined, full fronts me."

God, we say, is the perfection of power, wisdom, righteousness, and love. He is that Being than whom no higher can be conceived. If this is so, then the struggle after perfection is the drawing nearer unto him. And faith in him is no strange, unnatural process, — it is simply opening our eyes.

> "What is true through me sings praises to the Truth,
> What is good through me sings praises to the Good."

Here we have something in which we can trust. The universe is a mighty sea. We cannot fathom it or bound it. But our little lives are upheld on its bosom, and we need not drift about without aim or hope. There are currents of spiritual power whose flow is constant, and to which our spirits respond. What is good in us points toward a supreme Good. Here is a compass by which we may direct our course.

Certain of this, we can afford to wait for the knowledge of many other things to come by slower processes. We need not be troubled because we cannot comprehend the

Infinite, nor because our thoughts of what He is like may change. Our symbols fail because knowledge grows. But the essence of worship is ever the same. The child rejoices in a goodness it has experienced, and through that comes to believe in a greater good beyond.

We have but to accept this natural piety, to keep it free from superstition, to give it the warmth of love and the light of thought; and it will develop into a natural faith of manhood. "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." The familiar text has a meaning more absolute than that which we are apt to give it.

For consider what it is to know the law and inmost meaning of the home. How can one discern its purpose, and the spirit that is in it? The secret is hidden from the critical stranger; it is revealed to the child who has learned to love father and mother.

And in this larger home in which we dwell, who shall teach us the meaning and the law of it all? We cannot find it by simply wandering through the rooms or measuring the walls. The stranger or the critic can make little of it. But the universe becomes a true home to one who has learned to interpret it by love. This is the one method of interpretation that never faileth. Testing it by all the events and experiences of our lives, we come to trust it everywhere, and believe that —

> "Deep love lieth under
> These pictures of time;
> They fade in the light
> Of their meaning sublime."

Our intellectual conceptions of God are a series of dissolving views; but he that loveth hath caught the meaning into which they fade. So when the doubt comes, perhaps there is something greater than our thought of God, we are not troubled. Yes, there is something greater, — God is greater.

OUR FAITH IN MAN.

It will be seen that the faith in God of which we have spoken is dependent on a certain faith in man; and the attempt to build up a free church cannot be successful, unless human nature has religious powers and aptitudes.

The engineer cannot make his plans for a bridge without ascertaining the strength of his materials. Every new and loftier structure is an exhibition of intelligent trust. The fantastic heaps of earth of the mound-builders and the massive pyramids of Egypt are growths of the most rudimentary mechanical faith. Only after ages of experiment could one have the boldness to plan a tower overtopping the pyramids, constructed out of slender iron beams. So the institutions of the world, political and religious, illustrate the degree of confidence in the strength of the human materials out of which they are formed. Primitive institutions depend for their stability on their mass. Individuals are heaped together in dense aggregations. The social structure crushes out all freedom by its very weight.

Modern institutions, on the contrary, impress us with their lightness and elasticity. Strength is obtained, not by the mass, but by the quality of the material, and by the delicate adjustment of the different members. A constitutional government, with its balance of opposing parties and interests, involves principles similar to those which the engineer uses in building a great cantilever bridge. They are principles unknown either to the primitive builder or statesman. And so the idea of a church which shall admit and encourage freedom must seem chimerical to those who have no trust in human nature. And there are many difficulties in the way to this necessary faith. The creeds still proclaimed in most of the

churches of Christendom flatly contradict it. They say that though the first man possessed a nature inclined to good, he lost it by his fall. The fleeting radiance of the early paradise gave way to the blackness of darkness. Man's will is perverted: his reason is a false guide; his conscience is utterly depraved. There is no good thing in him, and unless supernatural grace comes to the rescue, he will live without God and die without hope.

And when one has escaped from this theological dogmatism he is perplexed by the revelations of science. He wants to find a complete doctrine of the total perfection of human nature and the infallibility of the reason of the natural man, with which to overthrow the doctrine of his total depravity. Instead of this, he is told of the humble origin of the race; and as he traces its history, he finds it a record of war and rapine, while the progress of religion seems to be through a maze of superstition.

Now, must all these questions of origin and history be settled before we can come to a practical working faith in human nature? If so, we must wait long. But a more simple and excellent way is open to us. It is the way suggested by Paul: "If there be any virtue or any praise, let us think on those things." The first thing to make sure of is not whether human goodness is universal and absolute, but whether there is any goodness at all. The misanthropist may be right in his catalogue of follies and crimes. We want first to make sure of just those items which he is likely to leave out. "What is the chaff to the wheat?"

Our business is not to elaborate a theory, — it is simply to find out what virtue there is. We want, first of all, to be able to recognize it when we come upon it, and then to cherish it and make the most of it. Here we see the helpfulness of a liberal religion. It means, primarily, a freedom from those prejudices which blind us to natural goodness.

Think of the effect of such doctrines as those of arbitrary election, miraculous regeneration, and the like. The believer is taught that the unregenerate man is a different creature from himself; that his heart is dead and cold, and that all his seeming generosity and courage and justice are but counterfeits. Only within the little circle of the saints can the grace of God be found.

A liberal church helps to a larger faith in man by ignoring these artificial lines of demarcation. It knows nothing of regenerate and unregenerate. All must stand on the same level, and be judged by the same standard. It does not attempt to divide men into two classes, calling one good and the other bad. It simply says, Whatever virtue there is, let us acknowledge it and cherish it. When we begin to look thus at our fellow-men, we are continually finding rare graces of the spirit where we had least expected them. Outside our little gardens wherein sheltered lives grow into beauty, we find wild flowers of religion springing up among the weeds and briars; and in desert places, standing in defiant loneliness, stunted and gnarled indeed, but unyielding in their fibre, we see the outgrowths of heroic virtue. We must not be morally or spiritually fastidious; we must cast aside our conventionalities and take people as they are, if we would learn how much of promise and power there is in human nature. We must be able to recognize nobility of the heart beneath rudeness of manner. There is a beauty in the cactus, that repels our approach, as well as in the violet, that invites it. For the cactus is the flaming rose of the desert, which brightens parched lands where nothing else can grow. So there is a rude, uncivil goodness which repulses sympathy, but compels admiration. We must not only pray for "all sorts and conditions of men," but try to understand and appreciate them. The Church has not yet learned how wide is that communion of the saints

in which it professes to believe. Nor do we always realize how much religion there is in the world which is not conscious of itself. It has grown up with little aid from ecclesiastical forms, and with no knowledge of ecclesiastical phrases. In ignorance and in weakness there is often cherished a piety which puts our pretensions to shame. When we see it, let us rejoice. What if the shy flower cannot be transplanted to our conservatory? Let it grow where God planted it.

That was a fine rebuke of the Christian apostle to meddling churchmanship, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Yes, the Lord knoweth them, and as we grow in grace, we will learn to know them too, without looking at the labels. We will not be so anxious as we now are to reduce them all to our forms. Little Pippa singing in the streets to the sinful souls above, —

> "God 's in his heaven;
> All 's well with the world"

would not be more religious, if she were clothed in white and set to singing "jubilates" in the cathedral choir.

And so, too, our faith in the religious capabilities of man grows more strong as we rid ourselves of theological prejudice in the reading of history. Many of us were taught to distinguish between the true religion and the false religions of the world. The true religion is from God; the false religions are all human and show the hopelessness of all human effort. See, it was said, what the natural heart worships. Study the abominations of primitive idolatries. See the fires of horrid Moloch; see "the brutish gods of Nile," and the worshippers bowing down to stocks and stones. All is an evidence of the depraved instincts of the heart. And as to-day we read the history of religion in the light of science, the shadows are not less dark. What cruelty!

what superstition! We see the frenzied priest dancing before the altar where the human sacrifice is burning, and hear his incantation; and we say, "How horrible are these false religions!"

"But hold," says the historian; "this false religion, as you call it, claims close relationship with that which you call the true. Those who have watched most carefully are even inclined to think that the two are identical." Watch the growth of idolatry; see the fetich take form under the hands of rude artists. At last, wrought in purest marble, there stands in the temple an image of ideal grace and beauty. It has ceased to be an idol, and has become a symbol of the Divine. It is still only stone, but the stone has been idealized. At last temple and statue disappear. The workman ceases to make for himself a god. He realizes that he, himself, is God's image, God's temple; and so he worships in the beauty of holiness. So, as we watch the flaming altars, we see the time come when the father's hand is stayed, as he would offer his son as a sacrifice. He finds a substitute in a ram or a goat. Still we watch, and find the time coming when even this seems unworthy, and we hear one saying to his God, 'Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.'

As we watch the slow transformation, we fail to find a point where a line can be drawn and we can say, On one side all is false, on the other, all is true.

At first the thought comes in the form of a dreary scepticism in regard to all that we had before believed to be true. Perhaps, after all, our most spiritual faiths are but survivals of the intense impressions made on the savage mind. They may be but the ghosts of dead superstitions. When one is shown how Christian rites and doctrines can be traced, not only to Judaism, but to the most primitive Nature-worship, one feels that their

falsity is demonstrated. They have been developed out of false religions.

Here liberal Christianity comes to the rescue. It denies that, in the sense in which the term has been used, there ever has been a false religion. False theologies there have been, false explanations of religion, and false expressions of it. But religion itself has always been a reality. Religion is the life of the soul. It has risen from lower to higher by slow degrees. In its highest manifestations we recognize it, —

> "Breathing in the thinker's creed,
> Pulsing in the hero's blood."

But it is the same spirit which stirs the dull brain of the savage to devotion.

And the devotion of the savage is good, though its object may be mistaken. Men have worshipped devils, but not from a devilish impulse. Mariners have run their ships against the rocks; but not because they sought shipwreck, but because they were enveloped in fogs. Truth and not falsity, holiness and not sensuality, have been the desired havens, even for those who have made worst shipwreck. The history of religion is the history of the search after infinite good. In this high quest men have been hindered by their own sins, blinded by ignorance, led astray by superstition. Like the Knight of the Holy Grail, the disappointed seeker cries out, —

> "Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
> That most of us would follow wandering fires,
> Came like a driving gloom across my mind,
> Then every evil word I had spoken once,
> And every evil deed I ever did,
> Awoke and cried: 'This quest is not for thee;'
> And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
> Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
> And I was thirsty, even unto death,
> And I, too, cried: 'This quest is not for thee.'"

Religious history records many moments of such dark despondency. They form the pathetic undertone of the psalms, the solemn burden of the prophets. The taunts of the unbeliever in regard to the imperfections of religious faith and knowledge sound like tame understatements to one who has listened to the impassioned confessions of the saints.

But the wonder is that the quest has never ceased. Faith is born of failure. At last even superstitions become transparent, and we see the light of eternal truth shining through.

And another thought must be added. The same considerations which force us to acknowledge kinship with the lowest of our race, make us see that the highest are our brothers. The true humanity of the greatest and best men has been obscured by mistaken attempts to exalt them. This has been especially the case with the heroes of religious biography. The lives of the saints are made unreal, because all the natural and human elements are left out. Their purity and unselfishness are attributed to a miracle. We are taught to look upon their lives, not as the flowering of humanity, but as celestial visions, sent to shame us in our helplessness. "See what a perfect life is," it is said, "and realize how impossible it is that he who has attained it can be a mere man."

A strange argument this, as if the rose that comes to perfection should be esteemed less truly a rose than one that has been blighted in the bud. Humanity must claim its own. In the holiest lives it sees a revelation of its own possibilities. For life is one, and the highest types of manhood have been developed by slow degrees from the lowest.

The saints and prophets are but pioneers in the spiritual continent. The new land where now they walk alone shall in the days to come be full of happy homes, and what to them have been rare visions will be the familiar sights of every day.

OUR FAITH IN PRAYER.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." — EPHESIANS iii. 20.

I WISH to speak about prayer, — about what it is, and what it does for us. And by prayer I do not mean any particular form of utterance, or necessarily any utterance at all; yet I would not use the word in any but its old and most familiar sense. I would follow the admirable definition of the Westminster Catechism, which is in substance, "Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will." Or we may follow the words of Montgomery's hymn: —

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
. . . . .
"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of the eye,
When none but God is near."

The essence of prayer is here found, not in any form of words which may or may not be used, but in the sincere desire, the upward looking, the sense of a divine presence and power.

Now, what place has all this in our lives? There are in our day many good and earnest people who frankly answer that it has no longer any place. The age of prayer, they say, has passed away; the age of work has come. We must no longer trust to the desire of our hearts; we will obtain only what our own brains can plan, and our own hands execute.

I have not called the people who talk thus blasphemers, but good and earnest people. Many of those who have

most sincerely devoted themselves to the service of humanity have yet come to look upon prayer as either having no meaning or else a false meaning. And I think that if we accept their idea of what prayer is, we must come very much to their conclusion. It is taken for granted that the attitude of prayer is exactly the opposite of that of manly self-reliance. They conceive of two powers in the universe, which work altogether apart from each other. On the one side is God, on the other is man. A certain work is to be done; and the man says, "I will not try to do this, — it is too hard for me; but I will ask God to do it for me." Here are poor people in distress; good people say, "It is not for us to search into the reasons for this misery, or to devise a remedy. Come, let us unite in prayer to the Infinite Goodness, and He will send help." Or there is a dry country. One man in it prays for rain; his neighbor digs irrigating ditches from the streams in the mountains, and so renders himself independent of the summer rain-fall. There is no need to ask which is the wise man. Of course the man who works succeeds, rather than the man who looks to some one else to do his work for him.

And if prayer means the putting off of the burden of responsibility, then there is justice in what is said against it. Such prayer has been accurately described as a "disease of the will." It is the attitude of a beggar and a coward.

But what if true prayer is something very different from this? Those who have prayed most devoutly have not thought of God as of a power altogether removed from themselves, nor have they thought of themselves as being able to work independently of him. Let us look more carefully at the words of the text. Paul speaks of a divine power "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Such a power we might

well wish to use. But how does it manifest itself? He answers, "*According to the power that worketh in us.*"

Is there, then, a divine power which works in us, and manifests itself through us? Let us see.

We look out upon the external world, and we see certain forces at work, — light, heat, gravitation, electricity. What are they? No man invented them. Before the first man was upon earth these forces were at work. They are manifestations of the creative energy by which the universe has been made to be what it is. They are divinely ordained forces ceaselessly weaving "the living garment of the Godhead."

But we consider ourselves and what goes on within our own organism. Here also is motion, and here are manifestations of force unspeakably more wonderful than motion. No man ever could have invented consciousness any more than he could have invented gravitation. Human life is simply a result. A result of what? Can we give any other answer than that it is the result of the working of that Infinite Power in which all things "move and have their being"? We speak of our own will and knowledge as if they had an independent origin; but before we can will anything or know anything this mysterious Power must have built up the organs of thought.

We then come to face this fact, — that there is a power greater than ourselves which yet manifests itself in us. Saint Paul prays for the Ephesian disciples that they might "apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." It may have seemed to them a very commonplace thing, this human love for one whose very nature called for love; but their teacher tells them that could they know all that was implied in it, they would find that it brought to them the very "fulness of God."

And so our life may not seem very wonderful to us. But could we see it as it is, — could we see the length of it, through what unknown ages the life forces have been developing, what an eternity awaits the race and the individual soul; could we see the breadth of it, how our life touches, in its relationships, all life; could we see how deep is the mystery of its origin, how high are the possibilities of its destiny, — we would no longer cry, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." It would have already sufficed, and more than sufficed, to have seen what God hath wrought in his children. We would no longer cry, "Show us the far place where God works, that we may lay hold upon his power;" for we would hear the words spoken to us, "*Ye* are God's husbandry; *ye* are God's building."

"God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul, and the clod."

God is God in the star. All silent we bow down before the glory unapproachable, the light ineffable. No cry of ours can cross the mighty spaces. But God is God in the soul; and to the God in the soul the soul cries for help. "Out of the depths do I cry unto thee!" It is deep calling unto deep; the deep of need calling to the deep of Power, — that is prayer.

And does such prayer come from a weakness of will? Rather, it is the very highest exercise of will. It is not the casting aside of our proper burden. It is the calling of all that is within us to aid us in bearing that burden; and it is based upon the belief that we have not summoned all that is within us till we have called upon the God who is working in us. For —

"Deep below the deeps of conscious being
Thy splendor shineth there, O God, thou art."

When thus we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we mean that our heart's desire is that that kingdom should come in us

and through us; it is the opening of the gates of our souls, that the King of Glory may come in. The prayer, "Thy will be done," means, first of all, that we stand ready to do his will. The prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," is not the idle petition of the sluggard; for it must be answered "according to the power that worketh in us."

The attitude of prayer is not that of the ship-master who with anchor cast and every sail furled simply wishes himself in another haven. It is itself the lifting of the anchor and the spreading of the sail. It is each white sail crying, "Fill us, O winds of God, and we together shall cross the seas."

But if divine power works in us, would it not work alike whether we desire it or not? Does our prayer change anything? I think that we will find that the condition of receiving the highest good is that we seek it and ask for it. There are certain functions of life which go on automatically; but the higher functions rise into the region of consciousness and intelligent co-operation. The man ceases to be a blind instrument, and becomes a servant and at last a friend of God. It is enough for the tool that it lies without will of its own in the master's hand. The slave may serve in sullen silence; but he who feels himself to be a fellow-laborer with God seeks to commune with him. The best gifts come not unsought, and love is doubly manifested in the grace of asking and the grace of giving.

The goodliest guests do not force themselves upon us; they stand at the door and knock. Only when we open the door do they come in to us. We have life; but whether we shall have a deeper and more abundant life depends upon how sincerely we desire it. There are lives depressed below the level of the universal life, like the Dead Sea and the parched deserts which lie below the level of the ocean.

But the Dead Sea lies below the ocean level because it is shut out from connection with it. Once open a channel, and from remotest shores great waves would roll toward it, till it would be filled. If our lives are empty in a universe full of joy and power, it is because we have allowed the channels through which the most blessed influences might flow to us to become choked. Conscious prayer is the opening of our hearts that the tides of divine power may flow through us.

Saint James used no exaggeration when he wrote that the prayer of the righteous man "availeth much in its working." We never know what we can do or what we can endure until the consciousness of need has set every power to working.

Some summer afternoon you have been half asleep and half awake; every sense was dull and heavy. All at once a sudden demand was made upon you; something must be done, and done at once; and on the instant the blood pulsed more quickly through the veins, the muscles grew tense, the eye became clear, the ear became sensitive to every sound. A moment before your brain had been like a deserted mansion; through its winding corridors only dreams, the ghosts of thoughts, had been flitting. Now the doors are open, and the living world surges in. You see and hear and understand, first of all because you desire to do so.

And have you never seen, in time of great necessity, a transformation of character as complete as the change from sleeping to waking? Those who in common life had seemed weak and frivolous astonish you by their calm courage. Now first you know them; now first they know themselves. Only the surface of their nature had been seen before; but now in the sense of their weakness they have come upon the secret of strength. At the mighty cry of "God help me!" the "abysmal deeps of personality" are moved.

We wonder sometimes at the deeds of heroes and martyrs. What is it that makes the hero's blood to differ from that of other men? It is not the blood, it is the power that sets it pulsing, that makes him what he is. The men who gave their lives so nobly at Gettysburg and in the Wilderness were but common men. A few years before many of them would have shrunk from the smallest sacrifice; but the hour came when a new impulse took possession of them. They desired their country's good as they desired nothing else; and this desire transformed and transfigured them.

The first disciples of Christ were not men distinguished for intellectual attainments; but they were absolutely possessed by a great desire. One love constrained them; one purpose controlled them. Their very lives were mighty petitions unto God "for things agreeable to his will." In that pure fire all earthly fear and weakness were burned away; and they flamed forth pure spirits, ready to do all and dare all. Through such men God has ever wrought his mightiest works. "He maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire."

There are many things which we say we desire, — more of justice and of kindness between man and man, better morals, purer lives. We ask, and we receive not. Is it not because we ask with but half our hearts? When we shall in very truth desire these things as each one of us desires his own welfare; nay, more, when we shall desire them as we desire no other thing in all the world; when we cry with one voice, "These things we must have, though we lose all else," — that cry will not be in vain.

When out of the sense of absolute need men shall unite in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," then it *will* come.

OUR FAITH IN IMMORTALITY.

In Bunyan's allegory, as the two pilgrims lay in the dungeon of Doubting Castle, Christian suddenly cried out, "What a fool am I, to lie in a dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise, which will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Then said Hopeful, "This is good news, brother; pluck it out and try."

The promise which to Bunyan was the master key was that contained in certain texts of scripture, literally interpreted. But you, as you have lain long in Doubting Castle, have tried this key in vain. The authority of the texts themselves is a subject of sceptical inquiry. In vain you repeat the precious promises which once filled your soul with gladness. They are far-off and unreal. How do we know that Jesus thus spake, you say; and if he did, how do we know that his word is infallible?

As friends pass away from our sight, the old questions come back to us. Does our life, after all, end in nothingness, or is it a manifestation of something eternal? We turn eagerly to scientific and philosophic arguments, and yet they do not reach the point of demonstration.

But one thing is sure: Doubting Castle is not our home, and not without a struggle will we yield to Giant Despair. At length the thought flashes upon us that, in a deeper sense than Bunyan meant, the key called Promise lies in our own bosom. Not in a book, not in a voice from heaven, not in a labored argument, but in ourselves we must find it. Life is a sublime promise. The soul is itself the key which will open the locks of Doubting Castle. The word of a free religion is the word of Hopeful: "Pluck it out, brother, and try!"

But in the supreme emergency we do not trust ourselves to an untried means of deliverance. Those who think of death as something apart from all other experiences may well dread it. And the religion that makes the preparation for death an exercise that has little relation to the common work of life bears the stamp of unreality. Let us first of all take our life as a unit. What we want is not a way of escape from a single difficulty, but to be freed from the despairing temper; to be led from the dungeon into the sunshine.

In thinking of immortality, we are apt to get it in wrong perspective. We place in the foreground what God leaves in the background. We need to learn that "if we hope for that we see not, then must we with patience wait for it." The first lesson of religion is not in regard to the duration of life, but in regard to its quality. In fact, the belief in the endless duration of life may be so held as to be without religious significance. One man believes that he shall live ten years; another is confident that his life shall be prolonged for a century. Which belief, you ask, is the more religious? Ten years of loving self-sacrifice has more significance than a century of sensuous enjoyment. But if you multiply the century by infinity, the conditions of the problem are unchanged.

The religious conception of life begins with an appreciation of its present opportunity. "Beloved, *now* are ye the sons of God." The great emphasis must be put on our present sonship. Convinced of this, we may wait in all patience for the inheritance that fadeth not away. "If sons, then heirs" is the New Testament argument.

There is no magic in the opening of a door, but the key must fit the lock. And to one who believes in divine justice, the question of personal immortality resolves itself into a question of fitness. What is fit to live, will not perish.

To one who has learned the lesson of life, death does not come as a new problem. In a true sense we "die daily." Old things pass away, new difficulties face us. Giant Despair does not lie in wait only at our journey's end, — he is a familiar foe. There is a way of living and thinking that ends in despair. It is the superficial, worldly, selfish way. Sooner or later, when sorrow comes and personal disappointments, the man finds that he has been left in the darkness. But there is another way of life, and there have been in every age those who have found it. They have been cast down, but not in despair; and they have rejoiced even in tribulations. There is a trustful, loving, self-forgetful spiritual life; and this has found blessedness even in the midst of sorrow and loss.

Here is a key of promise. We pluck it out of our bosom and try it. One door after another of the prison of despair flies open at its touch. We see those who have endured poverty and hardships and pain, and yet have hearts overflowing with good cheer. Their lives have triumphed over difficulty. In them tribulation has wrought patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. With loving courage they have confronted Destiny, and the very prophets of ill have blessed them. The iron doors of their prison open into the garden of the beatitudes.

Now, one who has used the key to open so many doors, will try it when he comes to the last door, we call death. To him death presents no new problem. He cannot think of it as something apart. It is a step into the dark, but has he not been taking such steps all his life? And is not this the lesson he has been learning, how to walk in the dark courageously, never doubting but that God is there also? And so he faces death just as he has faced every other dark mystery.

"I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
The best and the last;
I should hate that death bandaged my eyes; and forebore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it; fare like my peers,
The heroes of old;
Bear the brunt; in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold,
For sudden the worst turns to best, to the brave."

This conviction that worst turns to best, to the brave, is one born out of the experience of brave souls. They have learned it in their struggles here; they carry the lesson with them in their supreme struggle. Preparing for death is not anything separate from the common work of life, — a noble life is one long preparation.

Can we not see how one convinced of this may face the future with serene confidence, though many of the common arguments for immortality may seem to him inconclusive? For human life itself is a reality so wonderful and full of promise that it makes these arguments seem superfluous. The life of the spirit transcends the explanations that are given of it. In its presence our common doubts seem shallow, and bear with them their own refutation. The soul may be "the unanswered question," but still we say, —

"Ask on, thou clothed eternity;
Time is the false reply."

Can you not see the place which the hope of immortality has to those who believe that it rests not on "the law of a carnal commandment, but on the power of an endless life"? We believe in the immortal life because we feel that we are moved by it.

People ask, If you do not accept the proofs which the churches usually offer, what foundation have you for your immortal hope?

I would answer, This hope does not rest, or need to rest on any *foundation* at all. By this I do not mean that it has no reason for being; I mean that the word "foundation" brings in a misleading idea. We say that a building is upheld by its foundations; that is, the natural tendency of each stone would be to fall to the earth, but the solid masonry under it holds it up. We take it for granted the natural tendency of the soul is all downward. What foundation have we on which it can be upheld?

You know how many answers are given: Because the Church says so. Because the Bible says so. Because Jesus rose from the grave. For myself, it is easier to believe in immortality directly, listening to the promise of the life itself, than to believe many of the "proofs" on which it is supposed to rest.

After all, this search after foundations is always baffling. A house is founded on the rock; the rock is founded on the very framework of the world; but what is the world itself founded on? It has no foundations, but is upheld by invisible power in the midst of space. And so if you ask what foundations have our hopes or faiths, — thinking of them as things which, like the stones of a building, must have visible support or fall, — the answer is hard. But hope is not like a stone, falling to earth of its own weight; it is upheld as the earth is upheld in space, or as a bird in the air, by the forces which impel it onward.

And what are these? I think that we will find that the forces which impel us to the fulfilment of our nature, to the doing of our duty, to gaining the highest good here, are the same forces which sustain the hope of a blessed immortality. They keep us in a frame where it is easier to believe than disbelieve.

We try with all our heart to do right; we fail; death seems to shut out all hope. But the very impulse which leads us to try again leads to the unquestioning hope

that in spite of death our lives shall fulfil their promise; it goes right through death to "the new heavens and the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness." And so our love for human friends impels us to refuse to believe that they cease to be when we cease to see them; and our love for all beautiful and good things urges us in the same direction. All this is not a logical foundation; it is something more, — it is the power, the impulse, which impels us to hope.

To a person who should say, "I not only see no *reason* for believing in immortality, but I never felt any *prompting toward it;* now, I want you to prove it to me," I could say nothing, any more than to one who should say, "I never loved anything, but I want you to prove to me that there are sufficient foundations to support love."

But if one says, "I love, but I want to know whether I have a right to cherish this love," then some kind of an answer can be given. And so it is when one says, "I have felt a mysterious influence drawing me to hope for a good which the grave cannot destroy. Something whispers to me that even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I need fear no evil. Ought I to believe this voice? Ought I to obey this influence?" The question then becomes a comparatively simple one. Here is a force impelling us onward. Shall we trust ourselves to it, or shall we resist it, and seek to crush it out? It is not a question whether we shall be able to create or uphold the force, but simply whether we shall allow it to uphold us.

Here first the office of reason comes in. It does not create the desire or the hope; it finds it already existing. It simply passes judgment on it, and says whether it is trustworthy or not. If we find that the impulse which urges us to hope for immortal life has its origin in mean and selfish emotions; if it is fed by what is base in us;

if, so far as we can trace its effects, it leads to the neglect of those things which are best in the present life, — then we are right in saying, "Here is an impulse which is strong within us, but it is one to which we will not yield."

If, on the other hand, we find the power of hoping and believing in infinite good to be a force generated in our highest experiences; if it is strongest when we are strongest, clearest when our vision of present right and duty are clearest; if the future life seems most certain when the present life is at its highest point, — then I think that the only thing that remains for us is to trust this power, and allow ourselves to be borne along by it.

The "future life" is with God; we must leave to the future the knowledge of its conditions. But "the power of an endless life" is something of present experience. To live at all is to hunger for larger living. To be conscious of ourselves is to be conscious that we are but the germ of what we may be, that we have scarcely begun to fulfil the promise of our nature. The path of duty seems at first to be a straight line; but we cannot long follow it without being convinced that it is a circle, whose centre is God. One cannot throw himself with all the force that is in him into any noble undertaking without being carried by the sheer momentum which he has gained beyond the fear of death. In fighting a good fight "death is swallowed up in victory."

In all this we are simply learning to trust what "is likest God within the soul;" we are holding fast that which we have found to be good.

The first word of religion, let us repeat, is not in regard to the duration, but in regard to the quality of our lives. It does not first say, Believe that life is everlasting; but it says, Live, — live bravely, unselfishly, reverently, with eyes ever open to whatever of good may appear; and having done all this, "let not your hearts be troubled."

Having tested the value of life, trust in its promise. Believe in the lesson your own experience has verified. When death comes, face it as you have faced every other dark shadow; and doubt not but that again you will learn how "sudden the worst turns to best to the brave."

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[No. 99]

THE

PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

BY

REV. JOHN W. CHADWICK.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association*).

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(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

My subject is the Punishment of Sin; in other words, the Ethical Sternness of our Unitarian Faith. "The Strict System and the Easy" were the terms in which the orthodox of half a century ago were agreed to set forth their system as against that of the protesting Unitarians. Theirs was the strict, the Unitarian was the easy, system. Was the distinction well made? Is the moral system of Unitarianism and of every form of reasonable faith an easy system? Does it leave morality without the sanctions necessary for its support? Does it make evil-doing a little matter in comparison with the sin of the traditional theology, the punishment of evil-doing so small a matter that it can have no appealing force for the imagination, no terrors for the weak and erring will?

I think we should do well to heed a challenge that is flung so often in our teeth. Woe to the preacher and the congregation of whom it can be truly said, "Behold, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument"! And the charges brought against us have not been absolutely groundless or unjust. No matter for the relative aspect of the case, — the possible retort that sin can be no such dreadful matter if a moment of repentance and the precipitation of one's self upon the merits of the atoning blood of Jesus can blot the record out. The fact remains that in our liberal churches the doctrines of the love of God and the divine forgiveness have often tended to obscure the laws of moral retribution. "God likes to forgive little

boys: that 's what he 's for," a budding Universalist is reported to have said, in justification of his latest peccadillo. There is as much liberal theology of a certain sort compressed in that as of charcoal in a diamond. "We must preach the doctrine of hatred," says Emerson, "when love pules and whines." No, not of hatred, but of "the terrible things in righteousness," the sternness of the moral law, — a sternness which is not the negation, but the expression, of Almighty Love.

In choosing a title for this discourse, one of the first I hit upon was "A Holy Fear;" and I am not yet sure that I did well in changing it to another. Holy means healthy; and that there is a healthy fear inherent in any just perception of a man's relations to the moral law there cannot, I think, be any slightest doubt. Perfect love casteth out fear, no doubt, but love is very far from being perfect in a very great majority of human hearts; and, while this condition lasts, a wholesome fear is a desideratum not to be despised. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of goodness," says the Old Testament. "The beginning of wisdom," it is commonly rendered; but wisdom here, as in many other places, has the force of goodness. This doctrine of the genesis of goodness is not one that any well-instructed evolutionist would accept. Darwin found the beginning of goodness in the gregarious tendency of animal races, and Spencer finds it in the tendency of certain actions to produce pleasure and of others to produce pain. So far as fear had anything to do with the beginning of goodness, it was the fear of man, and not the fear of God. So much for the historical aspect; and for the individual the beginning of goodness is not the fear of "our Father who is in heaven," but of the father or the mother who is on earth. Fear of their punishment, of their displeasure, of their blame, of their disappointment, of their grief, — these are the beginning of goodness for the growing child. They

are not only the beginning: they are a continual moral brace and spur. Many a grown man and woman is kept from shameful courses by the thought of the old folks at home, the fear of doing anything that would bring down their venerable heads in sorrow to the grave. But the wholesome fear which encourages men to difficult duty, and shames them out of meanness, and keeps them from excess, is made up of many parts. The fear of statutory penalties, wholesome enough in many instances, is but the smallest part of it. Another is the fear of social disesteem, of the clear-eyed rebuke of noble friends, of the rebuke their character and their ideals would minister if they did not, could not, speak one word; if they were wholly ignorant of the committed fault. Another part of it is the fear of what a brutish vice may brand upon the physical organism; another, of that entanglement in which every secret act of wickedness involves the doer soon or late, the little sin ever steadily compelling a greater. Again, what fear more wholesome than the fear of being what we hate, of missing those beatitudes which have been promised to us by our most serious and consecrated hours? There is no need to go beyond the present life for a fear so noble and constraining that it would seem impossible for any soul on which it had fairly delivered itself to choose the evil way. But it is an absurd idea, a ridiculous assumption, that, because "we still have judgment here," a future life can have for us no fear. Fear enough the fear of entering on another life conscious that we have miserably squandered this, the fear of an accusing memory dimming the lustre of the bright immortal years, the fear of meeting those whose noble expectation we have not fulfilled, the fear of being known at length for what we inly are. The preacher of religion who does not seek to bring to bear upon his people's minds these "terrors of the Lord" is doing his prophetic duty in a miserably imperfect way.

I shall enter into no comparison of this heterodox hell with the hell of the traditional religion. I do not care to prove that it is every whit as terrible as that. Whatever that traditional hell may signify when the process of transformation which is at present going on is completed, for centuries, in its habitual presentation, it has meant that a man for not believing what he could not believe without intellectual suicide would be thrust into an eternal fiery hell, — a punishment that would make the God inflicting it more reprobate and more deserving of such pangs than any human being, though we should imagine one uniting in himself the crimes of all the Cæsars and the Borgias, the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons, the Sultans and the Tsars. The easiest system would be preferable to such strictness as that which Jonathan Edwards taught with sad-eyed, broken-hearted earnestness a century and a half ago. I do not even care to show that the reality which is now connoted by the symbol of eternal hell is not a sterner construction of the ways of God with men than that of rational religion. Of this, however, I am sure, that it is not a construction that begins to make "the sinfulness of sin" so evident and so deterrent. It threatens the evil-doer with an eternity beyond the grave in which he has no power of self-recovery, in which not God himself could, if he would, break up the torpor of his soul, or allay the fierceness of its never-ending pains of bitter accusation and of vain regret.

> "My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That, after Last, returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blest once, prove accurst."

Meantime, "we still have judgment here;" and Macbeth spoke for universal man when he declared that, if his

crime might have its be-all and its end-all here upon this bank and shoal of time, he 'd jump the life to come. If Macbeth could say this, with all his superstitious certainty of a material hell, with all his spiritual incompetency for measuring the scope of punishment upon this hither side of death, how much more can they for whom the fires of hell are only glowing metaphors of spiritual pain! As "a hangman's whip to hold the wretch in order," the fear of hell has never been a potent instrument. It will not be more potent now that its flaming terrors have all been translated into the terms of conscience and the inner life. If "the judgment of this world" could be brought home to sinful men without any least exaggeration, but with the unfaltering simplicity of scientific truth, it would breed in them a holy fear more potent to pluck back their feet from paths of vice and crime than any vision of the penal fires that flamed up in the old theology, or any dim reflection of them in the glassy current of the progressive and evasive orthodoxy of the present time.

The circles of the "judgment here" are quite as numerous and deepen down as formidably and fearfully as those which Dante threaded round and down, till in the lowest deep he found Satan, half-apparent, jammed like a ragged stopper into the bottom of the pit. There is first the hell of physical misery and degradation and defect. This is the hell of saints who have not kept the body's sacred law; of restless women who can never find enough to do or to be done; of the victims of society, so called — the round of frivolous excitements from which come prostration and collapse; of men who run the race for wealth till something breaks, and henceforth they are mere physical and mental wrecks along the road where others are in full career. This is the hell of drunkards, of debauchees, a hell fierce — flaming in their faces, burning away their physical nobility with its intolerable rage. It is much wider in its scope

than we are wont to think. As the violet of the spectrum shades into colors that we might see if we had better eyes, so, if we did but know it, there is many a physical penalty that we do not note as such, that with our dull eyes we do not perceive at all, but which, if we were more observant, or if we had better eyes, we might see plainly enough. We read of Jesus in the New Testament that, as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered. The story carries with it the suggestion of a universal law. Every man's face is being daily, hourly, altered by his prayers, by the desires which he allows himself, by the dominant passions of his life. There is many a face that is now hateful and repellent which might have been beautiful and attractive but for some secret shame, some fatal tendency of thought or will, some adultery of the heart. It is not the sensual vices only that insure these penalties. Greed and vanity and pride all twitch the mask aside, and show the actual man. And such is the unity of soul and body that it may well be doubted whether there can be any moral aberration which does not register itself upon the physical man, — not on his face alone, but on his total life. "I am all face," said the naked beggar to Montaigne, — his whole body equally toughened to the weather. So is the universal human body equally plastic to the stress of good and evil thoughts, of high and low ideals. If we could have a perfect chemistry, I doubt not that it would detect in each man's bodily tissues an "abstract and brief chronicle" of all the vices of his past life, of all the ignoble passions to which in the sphere of the imagination he has allowed full swing, though he has not dared to put them into the concrete of action.

But the hell of physical deterioration, ruin, and defect is not the only hell of those whose faults are on the sensual side; and there are faults much deadlier than these, — faults which make no appreciable registry upon the physical

man. No one can study the New Testament without seeing that, as between the brutal and the fiendish sins, — the sins of sensual passion and the sins of selfish and malicious calculation, — Jesus was kindly and sympathetic with the former every time. They were much less heinous than the latter, in his eyes. But the moral standards of Christendom have in general reversed this order. For the Roman Catholic, impurity has been almost the only vice; and in Protestant societies, for the woman overtaken in a sexual fault there is no "place for repentance." I leave you to determine whether Jesus was mistaken in the distinction that he made. Your decision against him would be immediate if the measure of a fault were to be found in the amount of physical penalty that it entails. For it is evident that our calculating and malicious faults entail no such obvious physical penalties as our faults of sensual passion. Are they, then, less severely punished? Nay; for the hell of physical deterioration is but one hell of many in the range of natural penalty for vice and crime. Even for the sensual fault, the physical penalty is but the smallest part. Another is the public shame, though there has been no formal, public arraignment, the consciousness of pitying or averted eyes, the visible grief and shame of nearest friends, the dread of sinking to some lower deep, the haunting memory of days once pure and sweet, the sense of banishment from the society of the purest and the best, whom still the weak and erring often reverence in their inmost hearts. Then, too, there is for almost every sensual fault a hell of correlated shame and sin. The secret fault escapes a hundred social penalties that wait on the discovered vice or crime, only to plunge into a vortex of temptations to new forms of guilt, through which the hardiest mariner may not hope to safely steer his way. You will at once recall the saying of George Eliot: "Under every guilty secret there is hidden a brood of guilty wishes whose un-

wholesome, infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires, — the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity." Well may we pray, as did the Psalmist, to be saved from secret faults: they are such mothers of lies, of insincerity, of dishonesty, of faithlessness. They are

> "the little rift within the lute,
> That by and by will make the music mute,
> And ever widening slowly silence all."

Can you not conceive of faults which, in their first inception, have but little power to curse and kill, but which, to preserve their secret, have so walled themselves about with various obstruction that no good influence can penetrate to them, and the man cannot break through into the freedom of a sincere and simple life? It is a tragedy which repeats itself as regularly as the rising of the sun. Happy are they who are quite sure that it has never touched their lives with even a passing shadow!

It is conceivable that the inveterate sinner may be so hardened in his fault, may be so deaf to the rebuke of conscience through prolonged neglect of her persuasive voice, that nothing shall disturb him in the base enjoyment of his evil way. Is this escape from punishment, or is it the worst possible punishment that can come upon a man, — to be dead in trespasses and sins? But this is slow to come; and till it comes, through infinite degrees of moral lapse, what accusation and what punishment there is prepared for every sinful heart! I see not what necessity there is for "future punishment," as if within the limits of this present life the resources of Omnipotence were not sufficient for the reward of every man according to his works. The punishment is oftentimes so great, so terrible, that it would seem to be out of all proportion with the

offence committed, did we not know that by such punishment the erring heart is made to see "how awful goodness is, and virtue in her shape how lovely, — see, and pine its loss." Once let a man depart from the right way, and there seems to be some terrible fatality through which, at every turn, he is reminded of his fault. Things that are blessedness to other men, are grief and pain to him. The air so pure, the sky without a cloud, the spring so fresh and sweet, the earth's warm coverlet of snow so white and pure, are images of lost beatitudes. Will he seek forgetfulness in the pages of some pleasant book? Suddenly he sees himself as in a mirror, — his meanness or his cruelty, his selfishness or his dishonesty, his faithlessness to sacred trusts of business or of home, depicted there so vividly that it seems as if the author must have intended every word for him. If not directly, then by contrast he is reminded of his secret shame.

"The play 's the thing
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king,"

the Prince of Denmark says. A capital device! How many consciences have been caught in such a net from first to last! more, I have sometimes thought, than in the meshes of the preacher's homily; so many that I find it hard to understand the accusation of the drama as immoral, thinking that, if evil men would not be stricken to the heart by what passes on the stage, they had better stay at home. Then, too, what accusation and what punishment for erring men there is in the high trust and noble expectation of their friends, and in the memory of past experience that was full of stainless joy! If ever for a little while there is a respite from these visions and these voices, there is sure to come along some happy Pippa, singing her untimely song, her unconscious comment on the moral situation. At other times, from out the silent dark the faces of the friends whom we have loved and lost shape themselves, grieved and sad,

as if they looked into our very hearts and saw what harbors there of unrepented fault and vain desire. Yea, for each one of us who has not kept the law of righteousness, till we are hardened in our sin, all things have eyes to see, "as if they were God's spies;" all things have voices to impeach, and hands to smite and slay.

Rossetti asks, "What is the sorriest thing that enters hell?" and makes reply

> "None of the sins, but this and that fair deed,
> Which a soul's sin at length can supersede."

That is to say, the real goodness of a man, which may, in one part of his life and action, for a long time co-exist with evil in some other part, at length gives way. It is the case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Soon or late, one must invade the province of the other. There must be war, and to the knife. There cannot be an everlasting dualism of the moral life. No man can serve two masters. Eventually he must cleave to the one, and despise the other. And what a fearful hell is that of real goodness broken down and utterly despoiled! If there is one more fearful, it is that which is constituted for us by the reactionary influence of a persistent fault upon the memory of the good that we have done. To think that even our most loving offices of friendship and affection have come to be remembered only with stinging shame, since we have fallen away from truth and righteousness! Thank Heaven it is not so with all! that there are those who graciously remember every noble, generous deed done for them by men and women who have been overmastered by temptation and fallen into evil ways! But with the most, an evil presence spoils the noblest past, making it seem an unreality and sham, which very likely it was not; while for the evil-doer his hell of blasted recollection has no sharper pang than that the noble and the good whom he has served with offices of the purest possible affection will wish perhaps that they could blot out his memory and the memory of such offices forever.

In my divinity school days, I read in Plutarch's crabbed Greek an essay on "The Delay of the Deity in Punishing the Wicked." But is there really much delay? There is of certain outward penalties. The sensual indulgence does not work its obvious ruin all at once. The penalties of social disesteem, of friendship growing cold, of honor changing to contempt, of ruined fortunes and domestic altars broken down, — all these may be delayed; but if they were delayed forever, the vindication of the moral law would still be a hard and terrible reality. There would still remain the hells of shameful character and of dreadful loss. "Be sure your sin will find you out," though you should go unwhipped of justice till the end, or scourged with praises which but mock the voices of your heart. "They that are in sin," said Swedenborg, "are in the punishment of sin." That was a real vision of "Things seen in Hell": *They that are in sin are in the punishment of sin.* And to be in sin were punishment enough if there were no other. It is punishment enough to be a brute, when one might be a man; to be a coward, when one might be a hero; to be a hindrance to all social good, when one might be a help; to destroy men's faith in human nature and in God, when one might strengthen it; to be a petty, grovelling creature, when one might stand with port erect and face towards heaven, without hate or fear.

In the last analysis, the most dreadful punishment is not anything that may come upon us from without, any social penalty; nor is it anything that may arise in our own minds of miserable regret, of shapeless fear, of imagined voices, — "Thou art become as one of us," from the bad in literature and life; "Depart from us: we never knew you," from the good and true. The most dreadful punishment is to fall immeasurably short of the mark of our high calling; to be so little, when we might be so much. In Shakespeare's plays, how little does the tragic end of Mac-

beth or Iago, Regan or Goneril, add to our sense of their great misery! To be a Macbeth or an Iago, a Regan or a Goneril, that is more terrible than any outward ruin, or any consciousness of an impassable gulf between ourselves and those in whose approval we could see the smile of God.

> "I sent my soul through the invisible,
> Some letter of the after-life to spell;
> And by and by my soul returned to me,
> And answered, 'I myself am heaven — and hell.'"

Hell unmistakably for the unrighteous man, however clear of outward suffering for his sin, however dead to inward pleading and expostulation, — most unmistakably when most dead to these; but heaven with equal certainty for those who, if they must say, "I am poor and despised," can add, "Yet have I kept thy precepts." It would be a very dark and gloomy picture that I have presented to your minds and to your consciences and hearts, were it not that it involves an opposite as full of brightness and of cheer. For there is no misery of wickedness and no painfulness of accusation or of punishment for the erring soul which has not a corresponding excellence and satisfaction and beatitude for the soul unswervingly devoted to the law of righteousness. But I can easily conceive that the terms of my discourse suggest, in various particulars, a situation foreign to your experience. You have your faults, but they are not so dark and tragical as those which I have seemed to have in mind. Yet, for such as you have, there is the same eternal law. You are less because of them than what you ought to be. They rob you of your peace. They turn your pleasures into grief and shame. The friendship and the love that are given you so lavishly, — you must often ask yourselves if you are worthy of such costly gifts. Are they really given to *you*, or to some imaginary person? And if to some imaginary person, must you not strive to

grow into that image, so that the friendship and the love you prize so much may really be for you an indefeasible possession, so that you may rightfully account yourself one of that blessed family in earth and heaven who, though poor and despised, have kept the eternal law?

Such, then, is the ethical sternness of our Unitarian faith. Such is the heterodox hell. If our presentation of this theme has any claim to merit, that claim rests, not on its being ours, but on its conformity to reality and to the solemn laws of the world. That it can match the terrors of the old theology, I have not desired to show. But that we have not here any "easy system" is, surely, plain enough; and that we have here a system which, although the half has not been told, makes the intrinsic hideousness of sin sufficiently apparent, is as plain. What man is there, however clean his conscience, who can look upon these laws and retributions without holy fear? What can they mean if not that the Eternal loveth righteousness, and that he has made the way of the transgressor so immeasurably hard in order that, should "goodness draw us not, then weariness may toss us to his breast"?

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BY

REV. MINOT J. SAVAGE, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

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"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

OUR GOSPEL.

The glorious gospel of the blessed God. — 1 Tim. i. 11.

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. — Luke ii. 10.

A certain section of the Christian Church has for a long period of years assumed to itself the name "evangelical," — "the bearer of good tidings." These churches have claimed to be in some special sense the keepers of the good news of God. They have their "gospel" services, they publish "gospel hymns," they hold "gospel" meetings of every kind.

Another section has tacitly admitted, or has at least allowed the impression to go abroad, that it is not evangelical, that it does not represent and proclaim to the people the good news of God, that it has only the philosophy and the wisdom of men.

Yet these churches that claim to be, in some peculiar sense, the bringers of the good news of God, do not now place and have not been accustomed to place that which was the peculiar first great message of Jesus in the forefront of their proclamation: "The kingdom of God is at hand," "The kingdom of God is among you." They have placed this kingdom in the next world, where Jesus did not place it. They have built around it a wall which Jesus did not build, and they have set at its gates keepers whom Jesus did not appoint. They have

given them passwords, shibboleths, terms of admission of which Jesus has never spoken. For there is only one place in all the gospel story where Jesus, of set purpose, deliberately declares who it is that shall enter into and become partakers of the divine kingdom, — when he formally separates between the sheep and the goats, when he assigns to the right hand those who are to inherit the kingdom of the Father. And it is most noteworthy that not a single one of these conditions to which I have alluded does he anywhere speak of. He says nothing about the necessity of accepting a certain scheme of belief. It was not a question as to whether they held certain opinions about God or about himself or about the origin and nature of man. The one only condition which he there establishes, — and we should suppose that he would have felt it incumbent upon himself to set forth the true conditions there, if anywhere, — the one only condition to which he refers is the simple one of character and of human service.

I do not propose to-night to antagonize the beliefs of others any more than is absolutely necessary. I would that I might avoid one single reference which could in any way be construed into antagonism. I shall speak as briefly as may be, by way of definition, for the sake of clearness, and that we may realize our position, and understand the glorious gospel of the blessed God that is committed to our care. For it seems to me that we have so long been accustomed to think of ourselves as critics, as seekers after truth, rather than those that possess it, as only trying to find our way, rather than those who are on the road and should lead the way, that we do not half understand how magnificent is the message which is committed to our keeping, and for the deliverance of which to the modern world we ought to hold ourselves responsible.

I shall, then, discuss for a little a few of the great essentials of the creeds, as they have been held in the Christian churches of the past. My purpose will not be to discuss whether they are true or false, and I wish you to bear that point in mind. That is too large a theme to enter upon in a popular discourse like this. I propose to ask, rather, whether these great beliefs, as they have been held and are held and proclaimed to-day by the so-called evangelical churches, even if true, are entitled to the name of "gospel," — "good news;" whether the claim is valid that these old churches do peculiarly represent the gospel of Jesus, or whether it is to us, perhaps unknowing, that has been committed this precious charge.

Let me pause long enough for one preliminary word. If there are any here to-night who sincerely and devoutly cling still to the old faith, I beg they will give me credit for the same sincerity which I freely concede to them; and I beg that they will not think I am animated by any spirit of denominational discourtesy, but that I simply seek with all my soul, as I trust do they, to find, to stand for, and proclaim the truth of God.

Let us, then, note, first, the old doctrine of revelation. It is conceded on all hands, I suppose, if God exist, and if he loves his children, that he would not leave us without sufficient light and guidance to enable us to find the pathway in which he would have us tread. We might, then, naturally expect a revelation to be given to the world at some time and in some form. What is the claim in regard to this revelation as set forth in the old creed? I will try briefly to declare it.

During a period of four thousand years, according to the traditional estimate, God, by means of angelic messengers, through prophets, through inspired writers, delivered portions of his truth to a little people in-

habiting a country about as large as the State of Massachusetts. The rest of the world was left to wander and stumble in darkness, finding its way as it might, according to the utterly inadequate light of natural reason, this natural reason perverted so that it had no power to discern the truth of God. At the end of this four thousand years a wider, newer revelation is given. Christianity becomes the dominant power of the so-called civilized world. Yet, after Christianity has been in existence for nearly two thousand years, this revelation is made known to hardly more than one-third of the inhabitants of the earth. The rest still wander and stumble in darkness. Then this revelation has been couched in such terms and delivered in such a way that thousands and thousands of the best scholars and the noblest men of the modern world do not see their way to accepting it as a divine revelation. Beginning in barbarism, with barbaric conceptions of God and men, the Bible rises as civilization rises, ever growing up toward a fairer and a nobler ideal. So these critics to whom I have referred are compelled to feel that the revelation bears everywhere the marks of human origin, human limitations and defects.

Then we must remember that, according to the revelation that has been made to the modern world, the human race was in existence at least a hundred thousand — probably two hundred thousand — years before the dream of Adam or of Eden ever entered the human mind. Here, then, are all these countless prehistoric millions on millions of men and women who never had even one single ray of divine revelation vouchsafed to them. I submit to you, men and women accustomed to think and to feel and to aspire, that, if this be true, it is not good news. It cannot, in any proper use of human language, be proclaimed as a gospel. It is not what we should

expect to be the method of the loving and impartial Father who cares equally for all his children. The popular doctrine, then, as to revelation is not good news. Even if true, it is not entitled to be called a gospel.

Let us turn now to consider the character of God as set forth in the old creeds. I can only touch upon this briefly.

God, we are told, is infinite, a Being of all power, all wisdom, and all love; and yet this Being, who is all power and able to save all men, has vouchsafed his light and the message of his salvation to only the smallest part of his creatures. We are told that he is good; and yet for thousands of years he has been proclaimed as the embodiment of the principle that "might makes right." Paul, for example, says: "Who art thou that repliest against God? Has not the potter power over his clay to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?" Yes, we freely concede that the potter has power over his clay, because it is clay, and because it cannot possibly concern the clay whether it be made into one kind of vessel or another. But, if the vessels could feel, if they were capable of infinite pain, would the potter then have power over his clay to do with it merely as he pleased? Can we accept, then, this conception of God as a Being of infinite love, one who does what he will with his creatures, choosing one here and another there to be saved as monuments of his infinite mercy, and passing by the great majority of mankind in all ages, leaving them so to suffer eternal pain as monuments of his so-called justice and his wrath? We submit that the infinite God, who has created the universe and all the creatures that live and breathe, is under a responsibility at least equal to his power, — a responsibility to his own character of justice and of love. And we submit that even Infinite Power has no right to do that which is wrong.

If God, then, be the one who has been pictured in the creeds, who makes human souls for happiness or torture merely as it pleases him, then we are compelled to say that, measured by any human standard of right or wrong, he is not Infinite Goodness, though he may be Infinite Power.

You remember that dreary, fearful poem of Tennyson's called "Despair," in which he refers to this conception of God: —

"I should call on that Infinite Love that has served us so well?
Infinite Cruelty, rather, that made everlasting hell, —
Made us, foreknew us, foredoomed us, and does what he will with his own!
Better our dead, brute mother, who never has heard us groan!"

This is the way the tender-hearted, magnificent poet expresses his indignation against that conception of an Infinite Power who rules the world according to his own whim and caprice. Read the poem for its terrible indictment of the old-time creed.

If there be this kind of God in the universe, we will bow our heads perforce, because we must; but we will not stultify our own sense of that which is tender and human and true and loving by calling him good. And, if I believed that there were such a God, I would not bend in worship at the foot of his throne. I would rather stand erect and bear the lightning of his wrath. If there be such a God, the proclamation of the fact certainly is not good news. It would be the saddest news that was ever brought to this poor, sin-stricken, discouraged, troubled, yet so far hopeful world.

Let me turn and consider the doctrine of man as held by the old creeds, — man created perfect six thousand years ago, so perfect that old Dr. South, in the time of Charles II., declared Socrates and Plato to be only

broken remnants of an Adam. Yet at the first temptation he fell! This might not be so strange or so contradictory of the grace of God; but this first man was so constituted that in him all the unborn millions of the world fell, too. When children come into the world, in their helplessness and sweet infancy, they are under the anger of the Infinite One. They are born in such a way that they have no power to discern the right or to choose it when discerned. They must wait helpless until moved upon by the Infinite Pity, if so be that the Infinite Pity is for them. And so these countless millions of men, drifting, floating upon the tide of being, are hurried by the relentless years until they plunge moment by moment over the Niagara of Death, into the seething waters of torment below.

When I was a boy and attended the monthly missionary concerts, I used to be told — and that was the great motive for doing all that we could for missions — that the heathen by the thousand every moment, at every tick of the clock, were being plunged over into the abyss of everlasting woe. Is this the kind of humanity which the loving, wise Father has created? If so, we will accept it. We will bend our heads to the inevitable fact; but we will not contradict truth and goodness by proclaiming this message as a gospel of good news to the world. It is most assuredly not glad tidings of great joy to be proclaimed to all people.

Next we will consider the doctrine of the incarnation as bearing on this condition of things. I shall not deal with the subject of the character of Jesus so much as with the dogma of the incarnation as a part of the scheme of salvation, and note the logical outcome of it. For four thousand years God was presumably doing all that he could to save mankind. He sent prophets, angels, messengers: he inspired men to write and record

his will. And, as the result, at the end of four thousand years there was one small people a part of whom were trying to be obedient. But the majority, even of them, were still astray concerning the truth of God and their relations to him. They were obdurate, stiff-necked, disobedient. At the end of this time God himself comes down to the earth. He takes upon himself our human form, becomes a man, suffers, teaches, lives for thirty years, and dies an ignominious death. Then he ascends on high to sit on the throne of the universe. He organizes his Church, and sends out his infinite Spirit to inform and inspire this Church, and lead it in its missionary operations for the salvation of the world. And, presumably, for the last nineteen hundred years he has been doing all that he can do to save mankind; and yet to-day what is the result? The outcome of this stupendous miracle of revelation and incarnation is that hardly one-third of the world has ever heard of him. The majority of that third does not believe. Thousands do not care; and even in the churches themselves they tell us that there are large numbers of those who profess to accept this scheme who are not hopefully saved. I submit to you that, if this be true, it is the most stupendous and lamentable failure in the history of mankind. It is certainly not a gospel to be proclaimed as the good news of the blessed God.

A word now upon human destiny. This has been implied all along in what I have already said. The destiny of the great majority of the human race, after everything that God has devised and has been trying to do for it, is something so terrible as to be utterly inconceivable by the imagination of man. Not only we who dare to hold what we believe to be a brighter, more cheery faith, but those who have held the old ideas, have been pressed upon by the difficulties of it until they

have bowed their heads and been unable to speak. Dr. Albert Barnes of Philadelphia, in his time one of the ablest leaders of the Presbyterian Church, has left his thoughts in this respect on record. He says, substantially: "Friends tell me that they have been able to find light on this problem. I have listened to their explanations, and have tried to understand them; but, when I look over the world and see millions on millions of men utterly careless, indifferent, and going down to everlasting death, and when I remember that only God can save them and he does not, I am struck dumb." Then he adds these words: "It is all dark, dark, dark, to my soul; and I cannot disguise it." Albert Barnes, then, were he here, would join with me in saying that, even though he felt compelled to accept it as true, he could not proclaim it as good news, as part of the good tidings of the blessed God.

I am aware that there are large numbers of men in all the churches who will say that they do not believe this doctrine; that they do not hold any longer these horrible conceptions of God and man and destiny. I am aware that there are exceptional men, occupying exceptional positions, who proclaim to their intimate friends their rejection of these ideas. But so long as they are published broadcast over the civilized world in all the great creeds of the great churches; so long as the Episcopal Church, for example, through its House of Bishops, has declared to all its communicants that "fixity of interpretation is of the essence of the creeds," and that they are to hold in all their old meaning unchanged forever; so long as no young man proposing to enter the ministry would be deemed fitted for a pulpit while rejecting any of these doctrines; so long as the American Board, which is the missionary organization of the freest of all the orthodox churches, refuses to send a

missionary to the heathen because he dares to hope — he does not express it as a positive belief — that the heathen who have never heard of Christ in this world may possibly have an opportunity in the next; so long as all these doctrines are in the basis on which is organized the so-called Evangelical Alliance, — so long we have a right to say these are the general beliefs of the old churches. If they are, then certainly the old churches not only have no monopoly of the gospel of Jesus, but I submit that they do not preach his gospel at all. That which they preach, misnamed the gospel, is made up of bad science, of false philosophy, of tradition, of barbaric conceptions, of superstitions, — a scheme *about* Jesus instead of the gospel *of* Jesus. It seems to me that it is time for us to claim and to make proclamation to the world that we preach the gospel of the blessed God, that we proclaim to the world the good news of the Father.

I ask you now to turn to the more grateful contemplation of some of the positive aspects of our glorious gospel.

What is our doctrine of revelation? We do not reject the blessed insights, truths, and revealings contained in this magnificent book called the Bible: only we hold that "the word of God is not bound" in covers, not bound in any book exclusively. We hold to the truth that has come through the lips of Confucius. We believe that a part of the divine revelation was vouchsafed to Sakya-Muni; that Zoroaster gave some part of the message of the Infinite to his people in Persia; that from the beginning of the world God has been revealing himself to his children who have been listening and catching some sentences of his blessed truth. We believe that in every nation, under every sky, in every age of the world, God's revelation has come as fast and as far as

men have been able to receive it. We believe that there never has been more than one religion in the world, in the profoundest sense of that term. All men everywhere have been "feeling after God, if haply they might find him who is not far from every one of us." We do not believe that God has left any of his children to wander and stumble in darkness. All truth that has ever come to the world is, as far as it goes, a revelation of the divine. When the astronomer studies the heavens to find out the true system of the stars, he is entitled to say, with Kepler, "O God, I think over again thy thoughts after thee!" When history is accurately written, it is an unfolding of the method of God in his dealing with the origin, the growth, the decay, or the prosperity of nations. When we are studying the development of the moral nature, the growth of conscience, we are reading the revelation of God's law of righteousness written on the hearts and recorded in the lives of his children. When we catch glimpses, intimations, ideals, of those things that are finer and better than have ever yet been incarnated in the life of the race, we are anticipating that which is to be written on those new leaves of God's book, to be clearly read when they shall be turned, in his ever progressive, always advancing, and never completed Bible.

All truth is from God, as all light is from the sun. Gas-light, electric-light, the light of the wood fire or of the coal in your grate, the gleam of the diamond,—all is sunlight, no matter through what medium it may come or in what country it may be seen. So all truth is God's truth, whether it come by the lips of a speaker in China or in the islands of the sea, whether it be called pagan or Christian. All truth that bears on the culture of the human soul, the development of human life, is part of the unfolding revelation of the divine. So we believe

that God has never left any of his children without some rays of light, and the truth of God anywhere is the word of God. It is infallible, in so far as it is demonstrated to be true.

Is not this entitled to be called good news? We do not believe that God has pets and favorites, that the heavenly Father has vouchsafed only to us some rays of guidance, but that all men everywhere, from the far-off beginning until to-day, have been equally favored according to their ability to accept God's truth. God comes as fast as the world is able to receive him. He always stands at the door and knocks, not only here, but in India, in China, and all over the world. He comes to the mind as truth, into the heart as love, and into the character as righteousness. Millions of those whom we carelessly call pagan have reverently read some divine message written by the finger of God, and have been able to open wide the doors of their nature for the coming in of the divine.

What is our doctrine of God? We believe that he is not only Infinite Power, but Infinite Love; that he loves every child that he has created, and that he holds them close to his own infinite heart. We do not believe that there ever has been any gulf between God and his children that needed to be supernaturally bridged. We believe that he is nearer to us than our pulse-beat, nearer than the thoughts we think, nearer than the most secret feelings of our hearts. God is all power not only, but all love. As we look down the ages, hundreds of thousands of years, and see the first man beginning to lift his eyes toward heaven, we believe that God is by his side leading and helping him there. When he stumbles in his life or stammers in his speech, God holds him to his heart, and guards him as his child with unspeakable tenderness and care. Is it not good news to the word to

believe that God is the Father of every child that has ever been created, has never for a moment forgotten his love, but that he is ever leading and lifting every one in his struggle toward the higher and the better life?

Let us note next our doctrine concerning the nature and origin of man. We do not start with a perfect man in the Garden of Eden six thousand years ago. We do not go up the pathway of history, which implies that the progress of man has been a descent. We go back and down the ages; and the Garden of Eden that we discover is a jungle, and the man Adam, the first of his race, instead of being a perfect and magnificent creature, we see close on the borders of the animal world. We discern him hardly distinguishable from the animal, having just climbed upon his new-found feet, having newly discovered his hands, having just turned his meaningless cry into a voice, just beginning to look about and above him with that infinite question in his eyes which has been the root, the mainspring, the motive force, of all human advance from that day to this. We discover no fall. We believe it to be scientifically settled — that is, established by the scientific revelation of God's truth — that there never has been any fall of man. Rather do we place, as the corner-stone of the theology of the future, the ascent of man! From that far-off age, ignorant, animal, climbing by a pathway watered by tears, stained by blood, stumbling, falling, rising again, making endless mistakes, but striving with infinite patience to correct those mistakes, — we believe, I say, in man's ascent up the ages. In those far-off, prehistoric times, man, as the result of self-sacrifice as noble as our own, laid the foundations of the world as it exists to-day. These men climbed on and up until we see such heights as those represented by the names of Homer, of Socrates, of Aristotle, of Plato,

of Virgil, of Dante, of Goethe, of Shakespeare, such heights of spiritual attainment as Confucius, as Zoroaster, as Sakya-Muni, and, above them all, the magnificent figure of the meek and lowly Jesus, in whose presence we bow, Son of God and supreme product of humanity.

Man, then, has climbed until he has shown us such names, such characters, such achievements, such manifestations of all that is high in human nature, so that we are able to exclaim, "Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be!" For we believe that, as we go on to gain higher and finer and fairer and grander visions of the divine, this poor human race of ours is to be transformed and glorified. Man, then, has been progressively climbing up out of the animal into heart, into brain, into conscience, into soul. In thousands and thousands of cases in every land there have been men who have stood masters of themselves, masters of their conditions, looking lovingly in the face of the sweet heavens, conscious that they were children of the Highest.

This is our doctrine of the origin, nature, and progress of man. Is not this entitled to be called good news, — the gospel of the blessed God? Is it not full of inspiration? Is there not that in it which should kindle our enthusiasm? Should we not be fired by a message like this, not content until we have proclaimed it in every nation, every city, every hamlet, every home in all the world?

And what is our doctrine concerning Jesus and the incarnation? I say to you frankly that I speak for myself, but I think I speak for Unitarianism as well, when I say that we believe Jesus was man, born as we are: that he died as we die, — a man. I do not say a "mere man;" for I am not able to measure the depth, the height, the magnificence of even "mere" manhood,

I do not say a man "like us;" for Shakespeare was not a man like us, Dante was not a man like us, Socrates was not a man like us. He was at least differentiated from each of us of this generation by the magnificence of his genius, by the greatness of his natural endowments, by the power which he was able to wield over his time and over the world. I believe that Jesus was a man, and this is not to degrade Jesus: it is to lift humanity. They who tell us that they cannot comprehend Jesus unless they think of him as something more than human generally begin their argument by assuming a very low type of humanity, and then no wonder they are not able to include Jesus under that category. Rather do we look upon Jesus and see in him that which is possible in us all. As I read in the opening of the gospel the story of the birth, the childhood, and the life of Jesus, I cannot reconcile this reading with anything else than the humanity of the Nazarene. If his brothers knew that he was God, supernaturally born, how is it possible that they should not have believed on him? If his mother knew that she held in her arms the Almighty God of the universe, could she have wondered as he developed a precocious boyhood and an unusual knowledge? Could she have been timid about leaving him alone over night with his friends on the visit to the temple when he was twelve years of age? I cannot read the records, and believe that Mary herself understood anything other than that he was a lovable and wonderful child, as so many mothers have felt since.

Then, as I study the records of his heroism and of his death, I love to believe that he who expired on the cross that Friday afternoon was a man. If he was the Almighty God of the universe, would he have shrunk at facing that for the express purpose of accomplishing which he came into the world? It seems to me that

that scene on the cross is theatrical, if he was God. But if he was man, — if a man hangs there, and with his last breath prays for the forgiveness of his murderers; if a man hangs there, and, as he swoons in that last dreadful hour, there sweeps over him the chilling breath of a doubt as to his own mission, so that he exclaims in his weakness and agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" if, even then, with his hand growing numb in death, he still clings to the hand of the infinite Father in a faith that is mightier than death, dying thus for his faith, dying thus because he will be faithful to his message, dying thus that he may draw all other faithful souls after him to himself, — then can I bow in awe, in love, in reverence, glad that there is a son of God, my brother, a man like this, who, indeed, can be my elder brother, my friend, my inspirer in all coming time!

We believe, then, not in an incarnation that confines itself to one historic character. I believe, rather, that God is progressively incarnating himself in the human race; that in the very first man that ever lifted his eyes to heaven God was present, working through, informing, and lifting him. So, in all that is beautiful, all that is true, all that is tender, all that is high and fine in the human race, from that day to this, has been so much of the presence and gracious power of God.

As the years go by, God is more and more to become incarnate in the human race. The significant and central thought, to my mind, in the character and life of Jesus is his consciousness of oneness with the Father, — the same kind of oneness which he tells us he expects us to develop. As he is one with the Father, he wishes us to be one with the Father and with him. If he be not man, if being divine be different from the divinest humanity, then he cannot be my exemplar, and I cannot

attempt to copy him. Dr. Lyman Abbott of Plymouth Church, the editor of the "Outlook," said, in an article in the "Forum" three or four years ago, that he did not believe there was any difference in kind between God and Jesus and man. He believed that man was God minus infinity, and God was man plus infinity. Our conception of Jesus is that he is divine as man may be divine. Did you ever stop to think of it? If the Almighty God were determined to put all possible of the divine into the life of a single man, he could put in no more than the man could hold. That is, he could not possibly be anything more than a perfect man. Perfect man is that which Jesus has pointed out as the ideal for all of us to seek to attain. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

And now I come to speak of one more point, — our gospel as to the destiny of the race. I do not believe that death came into this world as the result of the invasion of evil from without. I do not believe that death is the result of human sin or a token of divine anger. I believe that it is as natural as birth, that it is a part of the universal and eternal order of God. I believe that all men, as they pass through this experience which we call death, are five minutes after that experience precisely what they were five minutes before. I do not believe that there is anything in this experience that determines destiny or limits probation. Everywhere men are under the universal law of cause and effect, and under that law are creating their own characters, their own heavens, their own hells.

What is our doctrine of salvation? We do not believe that the acceptance of any formal creed necessarily changes character. We do not believe that the partaking of any sacrament necessarily changes character. We do not believe that placing water or oil on the forehead

necessarily changes the soul within. We believe not even that character is the condition of salvation. We go deeper than that, and assert that character is salvation, in this world or any other world; that there is no salvation beyond the limits of character. We have learned enough to consider as utterly shallow and antiquated the old idea that place determines hell or heaven. I used to imagine when I was a boy, and I used to dream over it as a part of that dreadful closing scene that filled my imagination, that, if I could only get through the gate before it was closed for the last time, I should be in heaven as really as Peter or John or any of the saints who were haloed with the glory of the past. But we know enough of this world and of human character today to take a deeper view than that. There are men and women whose houses are the receptacle of everything that money can buy, filled with art, with books, with musical instruments. They have at their disposal servants to come and go at their will, and yet they may be burdened with life-long sorrow and pain. And there are men living in rude hovels, in cabins, scattered over the land, with little money, living from hand to mouth, without books or music or pictures, lacking almost everything which men in civilized lands are supposed to care for, who have a song of joy and peace in their souls. We know, then, that salvation does not depend on where we are: it depends upon what we are. General Grant used to say, during the last years of his life, that he had learned to recognize two tunes. He knew "Old Hundred," and he had heard "Hail to the Chief" played so often at his approach that he came to recognize that. Would the way to make General Grant happy have been to take him to a symphony concert? Would you take a blind man to the top of a hill overlooking a river, and including a wide range of landscape, that he

might enjoy the view? Would you take a man with no taste for books or reading to a library, and expect him to find it Paradise? We know, then, that, if men are to be happy, there must be adjustment between their tastes, their feelings, their desires, and their surroundings. Their happiness resides only in this adjustment. If a man is perfectly attuned physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually to the universe, then the universe, with its million fingers, plays upon him; and the result is the music of happiness. If, then, you wish to be happy in the spiritual world, is there any other way than by cultivating the spiritual faculties, the spiritual tastes and feelings, so that you may be at home there? We cannot escape ourselves in this or in any other world. We have come at last to recognize the profound truth of those two lines from Omar Khayyám, —

> "Heaven but the vision of fulfilled desire,
> And hell the shadow of a soul on fire."

James Russell Lowell has put the secret in three lines, —

> "Thou seest no beauty save thou make it first:
> Man, woman, nature, each is but a glass
> Where the soul sees the image of herself."

Let us remember, then, that in this world the result of every thought, every feeling, every wish, every purpose, every action, inevitably treads upon the heels of every thought, feeling, purpose, action; that day by day and hour by hour we are creating character under the changeless laws of God, — the laws of cause and effect. Let us also remember that neither in this world nor in any other shall we ever be able to get into any more of heaven than we first get into ourselves. We do not preach universal salvation in the sense that universal and perfect happiness comes the moment after death.

We teach that in this world and in any other world men reap what they sow, that they cannot escape the results of transgressing the laws of God, that they find peace only as they discover and obey the eternal laws of the Divine.

Do you remember the old Eastern apologue that puts this truth with such force and vividness? A soul, recently freed from the body, is treading the unaccustomed pathways of the other world; and he hears behind footsteps as of one that pursues. He turns and sees a hideous shape upon his track, and, trembling with fear, cries out, "What art thou?" And the answer comes, "I am thine own actions: night and day I follow thee."

Here, then, are hints of our doctrine concerning salvation, concerning the destiny of man. Only, we believe that, as God has almighty power and is almighty wisdom and almighty love, that somewhen and somewhere he will bring all souls unto himself. We believe that he will scourge his children, if need be, until they are whipped out of their sins, out of their wrong, and brought to recognize the inevitable and eternal conditions of good.

Is it not the good news of the blessed God that all men everywhere are his children, that he folds them all within his arms, that he follows them with pain in which is love, if they go astray, that he follows them with peace and happiness, if they find and obey his laws, but that no one can finally escape him? Each man may say in the words of Whittier: —

> "No harm from Him can come to me
> On ocean or on shore.
>
> "I know not where his islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond his love and care."

Here, then, are hints of the glorious gospel of the blessed God committed to our care. We, then, are entitled to say, to cry aloud: Good news! God has never left any of his children without a ray of guidance! Good news! There is no gulf between God and his children that needs to be supernaturally bridged! Good news! The world is not lost: God is forever guiding it and holding it, whether it is conscious of that guidance or not! Good news! Sin is only a means by which we climb into higher knowledge and development of soul and character! Good news! Pain and anguish and death are not our enemies or the enemies of God, but only ministers by which he trains and leads us into something better and higher than we have yet been able to attain! Good news! God is love, God is life, God is wisdom! God is caring for the world, and forever lifting it to himself! Good news!

> "God's in his heaven,
> All's well with the world!"

O friends and fellow-religionists, if we may rationally believe in a doctrine of revelation, of God, of man, of Jesus, of destiny, so universal, so magnificent as this, ought we not to feel the finger of God touching each of us upon the forehead as with a chrism of divine consecration? Let us then pledge ourselves to God and to each other, so long as men are wandering in darkness, wandering in fear, misconceiving God, misconceiving themselves, and so falling and dying on every hand, that there shall come to us no rest until we have proclaimed this gospel of the blessed God in every home from the North to the South, from the East to the West, in all our land!

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 101]

THE

THEOLOGY OF UNITARIANS.

BY

CHARLES C. EVERETT, D.D., L.L.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE THEOLOGY OF UNITARIANS.

In these days of differing and changing beliefs it is not easy to define accurately the theology of any body of Christians. At the first glance this difficulty might seem to be greater in the case of Unitarians than in that of most others. Almost every other denomination expresses its belief in a formal statement of faith. To know what each believes, it might seem that one had only to read its creed. I am not sure, however, that the existence of a creed does not increase the difficulty. It introduces a complication. In these days, to learn accurately the theological position of the members of any denomination that has a creed, one must do three things. One must ascertain the real meaning of the creed; then one must learn, as best he may, the beliefs actually held by those who profess this creed; and, finally, one has to ask in what relation these beliefs and the creed stand to one another in the minds of those who profess them. In order to learn the belief of Unitarians, only one of these things has to be done. There is no common theological formula to which all subscribe.

It is not necessary to compare the belief of Unitarians to-day with that held by those even of the last generation. That their theology has undergone changes in the past, and that it is still undergoing change, is a fact that Unitarians frankly and somewhat proudly accept. De-

velopment in theology is regarded by them as a sign of life. There has been a great movement in the thought of the world in regard to all other matters, they insist: why should not theology advance with the rest? This change is very obvious when we notice the way in which Theodore Parker is spoken of by Unitarians of the present day, and compare it with the way in which he was spoken of by those who were his contemporaries. I do not say that all Unitarians would to-day accept the teaching of Theodore Parker; but he is recognized as one of the heroes of the denomination that during his life held itself aloof from him. The name of Parker is often linked with that of Channing, while preachers who hold views similar to his are welcomed to the pulpits from which he was excluded. The task is further simplified by the fact that, as I believe, there is a greater uniformity of belief among Unitarians than among the members of most other religious bodies. A creed is intended to promote unity of faith. In practice, however, it tends to produce divergence. The belief which a man holds, or thinks that he holds, is apt to be a compromise between what he would believe if left to himself and what the creed teaches. There is no natural line where these two meet. So the line in any individual case is more or less individual and capricious; while the fact that a certain belief is forced upon one tends to produce a recoil to a greater or less distance from it. Unitarians, being unhampered by any constraint, trusting merely to such faculties as God has given them, tend to reach results more or less similar.

There are, however, two real difficulties that meet us in our attempt to describe the theology of Unitarians. The first of these springs from a tendency which is met to a certain extent among liberal preachers of every name, but which is, perhaps, most marked among Uni-

tarians, — the tendency to keep what is commonly known as theology somewhat in the background. Comparatively few of our ministers have to any great extent an interest in theology, as such. In this the Unitarian preachers of the present generation differ from those of the past. We love chiefly to preach religion in its simplicity and in its uplifting power. We dwell to a large extent on the ethical and humanitarian aspects of religion. There is a tendency to keep in the background points of difference, and to bring forward the great positive principles in regard to which all unite. This is a healthy tendency, but it makes a little more difficult the attempt to define accurately the theological views held by Unitarians in general. In saying this, I have, however, already stated one of the most important points in the religious belief of Unitarians. It is the belief that religion is more than theology, that true life is the essential thing. This, however, may be in part my excuse if my presentation of Unitarian theology should be found one-sided or imperfect.

The second difficulty to which I referred meets us when we attempt to make our definition of Unitarian theology a distinctive one. There is, I suppose, no body of Christians that does not contain many advanced thinkers. If, by some irresistible call, all those in the various Christian denominations, and outside of them, who hold views similar to those which Unitarians cherish as their own, should come forth, and range themselves under a common banner, great would be the multitude. These beliefs are found masquerading under strange names. Some of the treatises, for instance, on the doctrine of the Trinity put forth by one theologian and another of orthodox sects, are read by Unitarians with some surprise. When they have brushed away the obscurities that result from the use of technical phrases,

they are surprised to find that what is announced as Trinitarianism is what they have always cherished as Unitarianism. Perhaps one important distinction between the Unitarian and Christians of other name is that he is content to speak the language of the nineteenth century. He sees no reason why he should not call things by their simplest names. When, therefore, he sees some theologians calling by the name of Trinity a conception of the Deity that Theodore Parker might have held, in order that they may speak the language of those whose thoughts they had left behind them, he sees no reason why he should follow their example.

I have said that the Unitarians have no generally recognized and formal statement of belief. The nearest approach to this is a sentence that was introduced a year ago, with much enthusiasm, into the preamble of the constitution of the National Conference. The statement is this: "These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and man." This, you will notice, speaks only of practical religion. There is no word of theology in it, yet it throws much light upon the theology of Unitarians. It suggests what appears to me to be the most characteristic feature of Unitarian theology. This theology contains no hint of anything similar to what has been called a "scheme of salvation." By a scheme of salvation I understand some artificial and indirect way by which men may be saved. This has generally involved a plan by which men may be accepted as being what in fact they are not. If we look over the history of religion, we find such schemes of salvation at almost every turn. Sacrifices, and indeed nearly all religious rites, represent some such artificial and often ingenious method of winning the favor of the Divinity. All such schemes are swept away at a stroke

by the sentence that I just read. It insists upon natural relations instead of artificial ones, real relations instead of substitutes for them, life instead of expedients for covering up the lack of life. Religion is simply love to God and love to man. Man cannot be saved by any scheme, for his salvation consists in the development of his best nature.

The "scheme of salvation," which under various forms long prevailed in the Church, was based upon certain legal fictions. The suffering of another and the right eousness of another were, in a certain sense, imputed to the Christian. This is what has been known in a special sense as "The scheme of salvation." The expression has been very dear to the Christian, and has called forth his gratitude for the love displayed, and also admiration for the divine ingenuity by which the desirable result has been reached. This — the typical scheme of salvation — is now losing much of its prestige; but it is succeeded by other, though more tenuous schemes, the number of which increases almost yearly. These often lack to a large extent, if not wholly, the fictitious element which marked the earlier one. They have, however, in common with the historic scheme, the element of arbitrariness and artificiality. They represent something outside of the life of the world and of history. Such a scheme is often assumed to exist, even when it is not understood.

Many put faith in Christ on the ground that, in some way which they do not understand, he makes the divine forgiveness possible. It is not necessary, they believe, that they should know the way by which their salvation is secured, but they believe that there is some such way, more or less special and artificial.

The great tendency of orthodox theology to-day is to what is known as a Christo-centric religion. Christ is

all. In this form of religion, little is known or thought of God except as he is manifested in Christ. Christ is all and in all. In some forms of this Christo-centric faith the work of Christ is fulfilled in the establishment of his kingdom upon this earth. In others there is recognized more of a mystical relation to him. In these views of Christ and of his work we have still, in a more sublimated form, a scheme of salvation. Christ and his work are superimposed upon the world. They are something apart from the great movements of history and of life. There is still an artificial narrowness. We still have something foreign, not only in degree, but in kind, to any other religious movement that the world has seen.

Among the older Unitarians something of the same view of Christianity was recognized. To some of them Christianity still assumed the form of a scheme. There remained something technical. At present, however, the tendency among Unitarians is to look upon Christianity in a larger way; and I am inclined to think that this tendency has to a very great extent reached its legitimate result.

Perhaps this fact may in part account for that comparative lack, among liberal Christians, of interest in purely theological discussion of which I have spoken. On the one hand, there is less interest in the controversy in regard to these narrower forms of belief. It is felt that the battle has been fought, and that to renew the strife is to a large extent the threshing of old straw. On the other hand, the study of theology under the large form in which Christianity is now generally held by the Unitarian lacks something of the zest which was connected with the narrower modes of thought. A scheme is never quite perfect, do what you will with it. You cannot draw a circle that will include the earth and the heavens. You cannot make an artificial scheme that

will at every point fit in with the realities of the world. You cannot make such a scheme which the human spirit will not in time outgrow. Do the best that you can, the result will need constant patching and enlargement and readjustment. To explain and to readjust such a creation has furnished occupation and interest to many a theologian. The view of the Bible which has been so largely held in connection with the "scheme of salvation" has furnished a most interesting field for such labor. The Bible was believed to be from beginning to end the directly revealed word of God. While it was regarded in this way, it was necessary to show that it was without self-contradiction, and that it was at every point in accord both with science and with our highest spiritual and ethical sentiments. Looked at in this light, it became one of the most fascinating of riddle books. Of course, in many passages the theologian introduced much into it that was not found there. So far as these passages were concerned a most interesting transformation took place. That which the interpreter introduced into the Bible was his own human thought. When he drew it out, it came with all the authority and dignity of a divine revelation. From the nature of the case the Unitarian has not this kind of interest in theological discussion and Biblical interpretation. Such artificial construction, such ingenious riddles, have no place in his thought. There remain to him, however, the great mysteries that have stimulated and awed the thought of the most profound spirits in all ages, the mysteries of life and of death, of mind and matter, the mystery of freedom, of the great movements of history, of God's revelation of himself, — not merely within the pages of a single book, but in all of nature and of human life. From this point of view the study of the Bible assumes an interest far grander and deeper than could be offered by the in-

genious efforts toward a superficial harmony to which I have referred. Such study naturally appeals to fewer; but there are among Unitarians on both sides of the ocean those for whom it has great attraction. It may be that some of these profound problems can never be wholly solved; yet the wrestling with them gives strength and inspiration; and if the shadows do not wholly pass away, yet there shines from time to time light out of the darkness.

We can here see the difference between faith as it is understood by the Unitarian and faith as it has been to a great degree understood in the historic Church. To this latter, faith has been very largely concerned with special and superficial matters. Faith had to do with the Bible as the infallible word of God. It had to do with the creeds that men had formed. The mysteries that made most demand upon it were those connected with the scheme of salvation. Human reason must be humiliated. Human love must be narrowed. An eternity of suffering the result of sin in the little span of human life must be somehow reconciled by faith with the infinite love of God. How many noble and tender souls have striven to blindfold their reason and hush the protests of their hearts, that they might yield themselves unquestioning to the faith that was demanded of them. Because the Unitarian has not faith such as this he has been regarded as unbelieving. To the Unitarian there comes also the demand for faith. There are mysteries enough in the world, and there is no need that men should invent them. It requires faith to recognize the supreme goodness that is working in a world where there is so much of suffering. It requires faith to look at death, and see there life. It requires faith to hold fast to the highest in spite of all that would drag down toward the lowest. It requires faith to trust to the

best instincts of the soul, where there is so much that would mislead. There is much to help this faith. There are scenes in nature, there are moments in human life, in the presence of which faith alone seems possible. There is the great movement which the history of the world presents, to which faith offers the proper climax. But, with all such help and such inspiration, faith remains faith. Though she may climb to the loftiest mountain summit, she reaches at last a point where she must spread her wings and soar. Such faith is not faith in an ingenious scheme, but in the eternal verities.

I have spoken of the absence of any scheme of salvation as one of the most characteristic marks of Unitarian theology; while I have been careful to claim for the Unitarian no monopoly of this or any other special form of thought. I have referred to this because more than any other aspect of the case its influence is felt in every part of the theology we are considering. If I had spoken of any one doctrine as distinctive, as of the unity of God or the nature of Christ, it would have stood very much by itself; but in the characteristic that I have named we have a fundamental principle, the effect of which is all-pervading. I have spoken of it as though it were a negation. In fact, the Unitarian belief is sometimes regarded, when compared with the older Orthodoxy, as being made up chiefly of negations. It has been regarded as a somewhat colorless residuum that remains to theology after certain positive elements had been removed. On the contrary, the negations of Unitarianism have been largely negations of negations; and their result is not negative, but positive. What has been denied are certain limits which theology had imposed, certain shadows which an imperfect theology had cast. The wind that sweeps the heaven clear of clouds does a negative work; yet its result is really positive, for it reveals the glory of

the heavens. When a traveller sees for the first time the Pantheon at Rome, it does not always at once occur to him that the two little belfries that stand one on either side of the dome were not parts of the original building. He is conscious only of a certain cheapening of the effect, of a certain lack of complete satisfaction in the structure before him. A moment's reflection, however, shows that these appendages were added when the building was adapted to ecclesiastical usage. As he in imagination sweeps these impertinences away, the grand old temple stands before him in the simplicity of its original perfection. Christianity has given to the world more of good than we can ever fairly calculate; but this Roman temple is not the only thing that ecclesiasticism has robbed of its true beauty.

The world with all its manifoldness of form and of life is yet one. The course of its history, from the lowest to the highest, follows a single line. This grand unity of nature, material and spiritual, ecclesiasticism has also cheapened and disfigured. The theological schemes of which I have spoken form excrescences upon the unity of the world, and stand to it in a relation similar to that in which the petty belfries stand to the temple of the Pantheon. When these are swept away, the process is one of negation. The result is a grand affirmation.

The ecclesiastical schemes do not merely add excrescences to the simplicity of nature. They draw lines and erect partitions which represent no fundamental division, but simply confuse and conceal the simple proportions of the whole. The world, according to such scheming, does not represent a single life. Its history has not been a growth, but an accretion. It has been built by a series of creations, one layer being superimposed upon another. Above all, the great glory of the spiritual life, the beauty of the life of Christ, does not belong to it.

It is something foreign. The Christ came from afar. He stooped to this poor world. He moved through it, substituting other laws for its laws, or rather setting all laws at naught, and departed, leaving a method by which not those who merely share his spirit, but those who in addition to this, sometimes even without it, fulfil some technical requirement, may be saved. I recognize as deeply as any other the wonderful beauty of much that has gathered about this scheme of salvation. The story of the descent from heaven, and all the marvels that are connected with this strange career, have a fascination for the imagination and for the heart. To many the world looks bare and cold without them. Many feel helpless and forsaken without some such special scheme by which they may be saved; but in the simplicity and unity of the world's history there is a grandeur and a beauty that no invention of man can equal. When the complicated theory according to which the movements of the heavenly bodies were once explained, the theory of crystal spheres, of cycles and epicycles, was given up, I have no doubt that to many who had become accustomed to this cumbersome machinery, the heavens seemed empty and uninteresting. But who to-day, so far even as æsthetic interest is concerned, would give up the simplicity of our modern astronomical science for this antiquated and complicated arrangement? Man's inventions may be ingenious, but in nature there is something better than ingenuity. It is the simplicity of nature that the Unitarian theology seeks, and, as we believe, in part has found.

In what I have said I must not be understood to affirm that all Unitarians deny the truth of all the stories of so-called miracles that are recorded in the New Testament. This is not the case. For the reasons that I have already given, I cannot state to what extent this is done. I am

confident, however, that very few, if any, Unitarians would to-day base their belief in Christianity on any such foundation; and I am inclined to think that all, or nearly all, who accept as true these stories of the miraculous, would see in the so-called miracle the manifestation of some higher and unfamiliar law, and not a suspension or violation of all law.

It is this interest in the simple and natural manifestations of the life of the world, that led to the glad reception on the part of many Unitarians, of the theory of evolution, as this was made something real and tangible in the work of Darwin. This theory has slowly made its way to a somewhat reluctant acceptance by many Christians of every name; but I think that among Unitarians there were many more than elsewhere who hailed it with delight. At the same time this theory has done much to make the Unitarian conscious of his true position.

In the light of this theory, many distinctions that have seemed absolute had to disappear. There is no material substance that is not in some way and in some degree instinct with the promise and potency of the higher life. The lowest forms of being point toward the highest. The whole history of the world is animated by the impulse toward a common end. As Emerson sang,

> "There is no great and no small
> To the soul that maketh all."

It is the soul, in its pressure toward the full realization and consciousness of itself and of its divine relationships, that has made the world.

This whole attitude of Unitarian theology is well illustrated by its thought of Christ and Christianity in their relation to other religious teachers and to other religions. To the older Orthodoxy Christianity stood

alone. It was true, while other religions were false. It was revealed, while in other religions are found simply human guesses. It came from heaven, while other religions were of the earth, earthy. Indeed, other religions were more often referred to as illustrations of the depravity of human nature than of its divine possibilities. One theological writer, more liberal than many others, has in somewhat recent years affirmed that in Christianity God came down to man, while in other religions man was struggling up toward God. This statement is dishonorable to Christianity as well as to the other religions over against which Christianity is placed. In Christianity also there was found the aspiration toward God. Jesus himself looked up with prayer and felt his spirit enkindled and exalted by the thought and by the presence of the infinite Spirit. Not alone in Christianity was the divine life manifested in man. Not alone in Christianity did the divine stoop to the human. It is impossible that the human soul should lift itself, however little way, toward the Father unless the Father draw it. There can be no breath of earnest prayer and upward aspiration unless the divine Spirit manifests itself in the utterance.

To the Unitarian the divine force is a constant element of history. It was present in the earliest period of the world, as the force which is to blossom into the beauty of the flower rests already unnoticed in the seed. When human life began — this strange and varied life of man with its loves and its longings — this divine force was still present, guiding and uplifting. The divine life in man, hardly conscious of itself, was yet responding, in some vague, imperfect way, to the infinite Source from which it came. The mistakes, the degradation, the abominations, of some of the lower religions, are still indications of the lofty nature and relationships of man.

"The fiend that man harries
Is love of the best."

In the religions of the world this love of the best sometimes appears really as a fiend prompting to all devilish excesses. Indeed the selfishness and lust and cruelty of man have often been blended with the religious impulse, just as a spring of living water may be defiled by the impurities of the soil up through which it has pressed. But this living spring of the religious life in the heart of man, this spring that has its source in the divine heights, has tended to free itself from this defilement and to bring pure refreshment to the souls of men.

Theologians have spoken of the revealed religion as if there were only one; as indeed there is only one; but they have spoken of it as if it manifested itself only under one special form, that of Christianity and of the Hebrew preparation for this. What, then, shall we say of the other religions that have seen something of God? We cannot see even a landscape that does not manifest itself to our vision. We cannot see a work of art unless the artist has revealed himself to some extent in his creation. How, then, can man, any where or at any time, have seen anything of God, unless God had shown something of himself to him? When the Vedic worshipper sang the praises of Varuna, the just and the holy punisher of sin, by whom the winkings of men's eyes were numbered; when the Mazdean bowed before Ahura Mazda from whom all the goodness of the world came, and who was himself the good and the hater of evil; when the ancient Chinese recognized a divine ruler of the world who was no respecter of persons, who looked not at men's descent and position, but at their deeds, — had there not come to all these some revelation of the highest? These visions indeed appeared in

the midst of beliefs and forms that were of a lower order, but the visions were no less real. There is, then, no religion that is not a revealed religion; and there is no religion that is not a natural religion. That these statements seem to contradict one another, and their combination seems to suggest a meaningless paradox, shows the low and imperfect view which many take of nature and of man.

It is this low and imperfect view so generally held of nature in general and of human nature in particular, that renders it so difficult for the Unitarian to make his position fairly understood. If he says that Jesus was a man, he is understood to say that he was *mere* man, as though there were ever such a thing as a mere man. If he says that Christianity was the result of a natural religious development in the world, he is understood as saying that it is only a human invention, as if there were ever a natural or human religion which was not in some degree the manifestation of the divine Spirit that has been all along present in the world. If, on the other hand, to avoid such misunderstanding, he insists that Jesus was divine, he is understood to be separating him from the world, and placing him in the heavens. When he denies this interpretation of his statement, he is accused of juggling with words.

The source of such misunderstanding is in the fact that men have been so accustomed to place, in their thought, God on the one side and the world on the other, the Divine on the one side and humanity on the other, that any community between the two forms of being seems impossible, unless they are forcibly brought together in an external combination. Unitarianism did well to insist, especially through the voice of Channing, on the dignity of human nature. The words "dignity of human nature" sound sometimes to us strange and

meaningless enough, as we look upon the selfishness and greed that play so great a part in the affairs of men. We must remember, however, that the greatest and the best are as truly men as the lowest and the meanest. Both belong to the same race. If the one class shows, pitifully enough, somewhat of the actual condition of humanity, the other class shows us no less clearly something of its possibility. The Unitarian formula which I have quoted implies something of this dignity of human nature. It speaks of love to man, just as Jesus did, as one side of the religious life. The phrase you will notice is "*love* to man." It is not pity for man, it is not merely sympathy, it is not merely duty toward man: it is love. Love implies that to the lover there is something lovable in the object of his affection.

The dignity of human nature consists in the grandeur of its possibilities. These possibilities result from the fact that in man the divine force which has been the moving power in the development of nature may attain to consciousness of itself, and thus to a more direct manifestation of itself. If the world is a godless world, then it is well that a God should descend from the heavens for its redemption.

Within a few days I have met a pamphlet written with great learning and strong logic to prove that, without the supernatural birth of Jesus, Christianity would be without basis and without significance. I imagine that few Christians would take such extreme ground as this; but, to very many, the power and significance of Christianity consists in the fact that it came from above to the world, and was not the natural outgrowth of nature and history. Our theories do not change the nature of things. If you call Jesus a God, none the less does his humanity remain. If you call him a man, he is no less divine. The Unitarian bases the honor that he

pays to Jesus, the reverence that he feels for him, and the obedience that he owes him, not upon theories, but upon facts; not upon any official dignity that he finds in him, but upon the work which he actually accomplished. If nothing is so important to man as religion and morality, then he who has done the most and the best for these deserves the highest place in the reverence of man. If, as most, if not all, Unitarians believe, the moral and religious teaching of Jesus was higher and more complete than the world had known, and if the religion that owes its origin to him is loftier and better adapted to man's spiritual nature than any other, and if his life was so in accord with his teaching that it adds to his power and is glorified by it, then there is needed no thought of superhuman origin or of official rank to draw forth the deepest gratitude and homage.

> "All hail the power of Jesus name,
> Let angels prostrate fall!
> Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown him Lord of all."

Thus has the church sung often in inspiring strains. The Unitarian knows little of diadems and prostrate angels. A different note fits better with his faith: —

> "And those who dearest hope and deepest pray
> Toil by the Life, Light, Way, which thou hast given."

It appears to me that these humbler and more human strains express the truest homage.

But, it may be asked, what, then, is the authority of Jesus? What right have we to find in him in any sense a revelation of God? The Unitarian adopts from Jesus his definition of religion, but he does not hold it merely on the authority of Jesus. The scholar thanks his teacher not because he has solved his problem for him, but because he has trained him so that he can solve

it for himself, or, at least, so that he can see for himself that the answer that the teacher has given him is the true one. So the Christian may be grateful to Jesus for such development of the spiritual life as makes confidence in its largest utterances possible, rather than for any statements that are to be accepted merely because he made them. Yet for these highest utterances there is an outward authority.

> "Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old."

So sang Emerson in a poem that well might seem the prelude to the later religious thought. Because they rolled out of the heart of nature, do they reveal the power that is working in and through nature less than if they had been grafted upon it from without? "Out from the heart of nature" must come the revelation of what nature is, and of what the power is that is manifested through nature; and of such revelations the highest, because it is the highest, must be the truest.

Thus does the liberal thought restore to the world the fair products that had been torn from it. The beauty of the Christ-life, not merely lent it for its brief adornment, remains to testify to the richness of the soil from which it sprang, to testify to the fact that a divine force is working through this life of ours which seems to us often so low and meaningless; that even in our hearts it may work some fruition if we will suffer it.

In regard to the thought of God, I know of few Unitarians who are greatly attracted by metaphysical speculations or theosophical constructions. In the formula that has served us in some sort as a text, the Unitarian speaks of love to God as the first great element of religion. If God is to be loved, then God must be thought of as a being whom it is possible to really love.

This by itself would sweep away beliefs that make it difficult or impossible to love him if he be such as they describe. Unitarians love to think of God as Jesus taught us, as the wise and loving Father. Moved by the influence of the later scientific thought, they love to think of him as one who reveals himself in the order and beauty of his universe rather than in interferences with this. What is loftiest and best reveals him most truly. In the mother's love for her child, in the friend's love for his friend, in the patriot's love for his country, in the good man's love for his kind, in the true man's condemnation of sin, in the aspiring faith of the saint, in the great heart of Jesus full of tender love of his fellows and of generous indignation toward those who would oppress their brethren, full of the consciousness of God and of longing to lift men into the same consciousness, — in all of these the Unitarian finds revelations of God; and in the inspiration that sometimes comes directly to the devout heart, and sometimes with its warning and condemnation to the sinful soul.

To the Unitarian the thought of the future life fits in with his other religious faith. "Eye hath not seen," cried the apostle, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him." So the Unitarian does not picture the coming life in the likeness of the earthly life, with the trouble all left out. He does not picture a hell where lost souls suffer for evermore. The next life is to him simply the natural flowering of this. What special shape this flowering will take, how can he know? He believes that there the highest aspirations shall find their fruition, that spirits shall somehow live in God; and this means that they shall live the highest life that is possible for each.

In regard to the dear ones who have gone from us, he

says with the poet, whose words have been more than once quoted on these pages:

> "What is excellent,
> As God lives, is permanent;
> Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain,
> Heart's love will meet thee again."

Such, most imperfectly stated, is what I conceive to be the theology of at least most Unitarians. Would that we were more worthy of it!

IMMORTALITY, and Other Essays

By Charles Carroll Everett

Size, 5 1-4 x 7 1-2; pages, 280; price, $1.20 *net;* postage, 11 cents.

THE late Dean of the Harvard Divinity School has given us many scholarly essays on religious and philosophical subjects. Dr. Everett's penetrating and analytical mind, with his ideas expressed in clear and simple yet finished style, lends to all his writings an interest and charm not always associated with the topics discussed. The two previous volumes of his essays have omitted considerable excellent material worthy of a more permanent form of preservation than the periodicals in which it appeared, and it is from this source that the following essays have been chosen for the contents of the present volume: "Immortality," "The Known and the Unknowable in Religion," "Mysticism," "The Gain of History," "The Faith of Science and the Science of Faith," "Joseph Priestley," "The Philosophy of the Sublime," "Spencer's Reconciliation of Science and Religion."

SPARK IN THE CLOD, THE

A Study in Evolution. By J. T. Sunderland

Size, 5 1-4 x 7 1-2 inches; pages, 230; price, 80 cents *net;* postage, 8 cents.

IN this examination into evolutionary processes and the effect of our modern knowledge of them upon our intellectual, moral, and religious conceptions, the author takes us back to the earth's formation, where the order of creation, so far as it is of human concern, begins. Then, after the lapse of ages, man and his evolution become visible parts of this world-process, involving the problems of pain and evil, of God and the soul and immortality. Rational application of accepted facts of science is made to the world of religious ideas, and the necessary modification in the old conceptions of things is clearly pointed out. Finally, regarding human destiny and the hope of immortality, the author reasons from what man has been to what, in the rationality of nature, he must be; for "all evolution is at once a history and a prophecy."

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25 Beacon Street, Boston

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[No. 102]

Unitarianism as a Social Force

BY

Rev. JULIAN C. JAYNES

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
BOSTON

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The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
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UNITARIANISM AS A SOCIAL FORCE.

BY REV. JULIAN C. JAYNES.

Jesus was not a theologian. He was a great teacher.

He was not the custodian of the keys of heaven. He was a spiritual energy set loose in the world.

He did not try to reform men from the outside. He opened the door, and aroused their sleeping nobilities.

Christianity, as it came from the lips and life of its author, was a message to man as a social being. It said nothing about redemption from a primitive fall. It laid no exceptional stress on citizenship in a remote celestial region. But it called men away from personal sinfulness to practical righteousness, and made them decent, honest, helpful citizens of God's kingdom on earth. Christianity primarily aimed to improve the social life of humanity. It sought to reform the world by reforming institutions, to reform institutions by reforming men, to reform men by lifting their motives and purifying their ideals.

Now Unitarianism claims to be the direct heir of this beneficent impulse of Christianity. It does not, however, arrogate to itself an exclusive interest in the welfare of the social order; but, as a legitimate member of the Christian household, it has adopted for its own those principles which it believes were the essential features of Jesus' teachings. While, therefore, other denominations have emphasized the doctrinal and ecclesiastical elements of Christianity and have developed themselves along those lines, Unitarianism has emphasized the practical and ethical side, and has generated within itself a temper of mind and heart that fits it in a special manner for righting the wrongs of society and quickening the highest qualities of manhood and womanhood. The same social forces that pulsated in the religion of Jesus are alive to-day in Unitarian thought and purpose;

and, what he was trying to do for the people of Palestine, Unitarianism is trying to do for the social organism of the present time.

What are these social forces? In the first place, Unitarianism recognizes the fact that society exists, and that its needs are present needs. This world is not a mere vestibule for heaven, but is heaven in the making. The kingdom of God is not delayed for some millennial dawn, but is here, in this year of grace, amid the rush and roar of human affairs. Here right and justice are to be done. Here men are to be saved. Here the eternal life begins. Here the walls of the New Jerusalem are to be reared.

In this conception of the immediateness of God's kingdom is found a new and greater motive for living the true life and helping others to live it. It defines the field of action, dignifies effort with a world-wide importance, impresses men with the value of their relations with one another, and, delivering them from the fatal self-consciousness of saving their own souls, fixes their attention on the larger business to which God calls them in the affairs of daily life.

Another social force resides in the idea of man's natural dignity and inherent worth. Unitarians have always assumed this. It has been the source of their inspiration and the ground of their endeavor. Man, a child of God,— not figuratively, but actually,— and, as such, possessing indestructible qualities of divinity. He is not fallen, but is risen. Society is not a jumble of human wrecks, but is a living stairway up which goodness is slowly climbing, displacing what is gross and mean. Is the world bad? Is the social life full of evils? Are men brutal and selfish? Then they are to be made better, not by importing some new element from the creative workshop, but by stimulating and training those fundamental qualities which the divine hand has already set in the human heart. Under the guidance of this great truth Unitarianism is working and hoping to-day, confidently making its appeal to the inborn nobility of man, seeing in society the power to save itself, finding in the growing sense of justice and the closer ties of brotherhood the ultimate solution of the world's social problems.

There is also a distinct social influence in the prominence which Unitarianism gives to personal righteousness. Char-

acter is the main thing. Salvation is not an other-world condition. It is health from the tip of the finger to the centre of the soul. When, therefore, every man is morally healthy, society is already saved, and the mechanics of reform are obsolete. Unitarians, therefore, say that character is the sanity of life, and right living the backbone of all social order. And in no Pharisaical spirit they quietly practice what they preach, and stand wherever they are as types of the best and truest citizenship. This in itself is a strong social force operating not only as a unit of activity, but also as a subtle influence, sweetening and vitalizing all it touches.

We see also in the attitude of Unitarianism toward the advance of knowledge another evidence of its practical interest in the social welfare. It regards ignorance as the nursery of half the evils of human thought and deed. Therefore, give men more light, and there will be less stumbling, fewer misunderstandings, better ideas of what constitutes civilized life. And so, whenever science has broken the seals of mystery, Unitarianism has stood by and welcomed the revelation. It has thus been foremost and virtually alone in giving religious sanction to the march of knowledge and in showing to the doubting multitude that the vital truths of Christianity can occupy the same room with the vital truths of modern discovery.

Unitarianism is furthermore exerting an important influence in its adoption of perfect freedom in matters of religious opinion. The individual conscience is deemed too sacred to be tampered with, and private judgment is conceded to be the inalienable right of every man and woman. That means the abolition of dogmatic authority, the destruction of sectarian intolerance, and the carrying over of the spirit of democracy into morals and religion,— every man his own priest, bishop, and king, every man answerable to his own reason for his convictions, every man unhampered in the evolution of his life by either creedal tests or ecclesiastical shibboleths. In this principle is embodied a social force of vast reach and power. For, if society is ever to become what we dream, that ideal will be attained not by means of any arbitrary authority from without, but by the exercise of an authority from within, — an authority based on the individual's consciousness of his responsible self and his freedom to act. Behind the true

citizen always must be the true man. And the true man can be developed only under conditions where he has the widest liberty to grow on the higher, nobler sides of his nature.

Unitarianism is proving itself a social force in one other way. It is in the philanthropic service of its disciples. However indifferent they may be to their own denominational interests, they are not indifferent to calls for practical helpfulness among men. What concerns society concerns them. It is all God's business and therefore their business. And so, ignoring all sectarian barriers and caste distinctions, they are ever ready with hand and purse to serve their fellow-men. Men are human beings first, and church members afterward. Give them room, light, air, intelligence, justice. Solve their problems, remove their disabilities, improve their conditions. That is why Unitarians stand in the front rank of those who are endeavoring to secure for men the widest culture, the last truth, the sanest philanthropy, and complete justice. And it can be said, without boasting, that certainly in New England, where Unitarianism is most strongly intrenched, if the roll of helpers and lovers of humanity were called, it would be found that a large proportion of our thinkers, educators, philanthropists, reformers, statesmen, broad-minded, public-spirited citizens, were nurtured in the Unitarian household and kindled their torches at the beacon fires of liberal thought.

Unitarianism as a social force! What, then, does it mean? Simply this: a thought, a spirit, a life, that is constantly issuing from it to modify and enrich the thought, spirit, life, of the social world of to-day. This influence eludes all statistical forms, and yet it is vastly greater than the present numerical strength of the Unitarian body would indicate. It pervades all the best enterprises for humanity, and is easily recognized in whatever theological livery it wears. And, if a word of prophecy were permissible, it would be safe to predict that the social forces of liberal thought to-day will be the dominant and duly acknowledged forces in the next century.

It is for Unitarianism, then, to cherish this peculiar privilege, and to go on building up a spiritual estate which will make the world rich. While others are devising new schemes of salvation or mending the old ones, let the liberal church

be content to create that subtle moral energy that outlives all schemes, and saves mankind at last. And, though its denominational name should pass away, the social forces which it has generated will still move on under the banner of Christianity, beneath whose ample folds all names are foolishness, and all sectional lines worthless and absurd.

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INCARNATION.

BY

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INCARNATION.

THE NATURAL ORIGIN OF INCARNATION BELIEFS.

The great affirmation of religion is that God and man are in essence one. All forms of anthropomorphism, all types of incarnation, are but varied expressions of this one affirmation. God and man are in essence one: in its low and far beginnings Religion said that, when it personified the powers of the sky and the storm and the sea, when it told their biographies in personal myths and legends, when it carved their faces with human features and gave them perhaps a hundred human hands, when it endowed them with all of the human vices and some of the human virtues. This we call anthropomorphism. Man could not do otherwise. He cannot do otherwise. He has to imagine, to *image*, the invisible in terms of the visible, the unknown in terms of the known. He has to think of the Power without in terms of the Power within; that is, in terms of self-consciousness. Though we will to mask the process by refusing to christen the image in the mind, no less it is there, — the image; and the image is always a personal one, dimmed away perhaps into vagueness, shredded away perhaps into fragments; the human only approximated, it may be, as when Egypt, singling out some part or quality of the human for the god, divinized cats and rams and bulls. But always and every-

where man has had to think of, still has to think of — that is, to mentally image — the unknown Powers in terms of self-consciousness. Do we call them "impersonal"? Try as we may to disguise it, the impersonal is still the imp of the personal. One way or another, therefore, man always makes God in his own image. The Genesis verse, where God says, "Let us make man in our image," only states the same truth the other way round.

The belief in incarnation is but one form of this anthropomorphism. Given the God, and grant him the wish to make himself visible, he must choose between rock, tree, brute, and man, or these enlarged to their greatest; let rock stand for the sky and the star and the mountain and sea. According to the chronicles of human religion, the unseen Powers have chosen all these forms of self-manifestation. But when they would manifest themselves at their fullest of being, inevitably they have climbed into manhood. They could not do otherwise, because, so far as we yet have explored either earth or the heavens or the hells, we find, or at least we are able to recognize, nothing above human semblances. As the very devils are our "bosses" with horns, so the very archangels are our saints with wings. If we knew anything higher than man, our gods would have taken that higher form. As it is, they have to content themselves with the human. So here and there over the earth we find these theophanies, — the gods becoming man, as men have believed.

ORIENTAL AND GREEK INCARNATIONS.

Of all the lands whereon they have lit in flesh, the lands of the Hindu and the Greek have given, perhaps, the most gracious examples. "In Vishnu land, what avatar?" asks Browning, in his poem, of Waring, the

traveller. For in Vishnu land the god has not done arriving: he is still breaking forth in the flesh, as many a time before he has come, — now as the fish that saved the good Manu at the time of the deluge, and now as the tortoise that supported the world in the churning throes of creation, and now as the man-lion who routed the demon-king, and now and again in some favorite hero of legend, and most of all in the good Krishna, — he of miraculous birth and the shepherd companions, he who, in the Bhagavad-Ghita, proclaims himself the Supreme, the Redeemer; in all his incarnations, gentle, humane, self-sacrificing, and a god that bringeth salvation. So with the Buddhas, who from the mystic other-world emerge as men, whenever this world needs redemption. Four-and-twenty times had they come before our Buddha appeared; and already, in Thibet, the worshippers worship the unborn Buddhas elect who are yet to come in the flesh, named and known in advance from their future feats of salvation. The Orient loves incarnation, and has what it loves. Only forty-five years ago the Incarnate God was executed in Persia. His title there was the Bab, or "Gate," — the young prophet whose lofty morality, whose charm of personal presence, whose power to inspire lowly followers to be heroes and martyrs of faith, whose fate after six years of teaching, whose idealization in legend after his death and before, are such correlates all to the story we love so well; as Estlin Carpenter has just been reminding us. Only three years ago the Bab's successor died in Acre, — again the Incarnate God, as his followers thought.

But more familiar to us are the incarnations of Greece. "Imitate God," was the conscious aspiration and maxim of Plato; but "Let the gods imitate man" was the unconscious law by which the ancient myths of Plato's race had already constructed themselves.

God's manlikeness was fundamental in the Greek mind. Coleridge's phrase, "the fair *humanities* of old religions," was right both in its noun and in its adjective for the Greek religion of old. Very human the maidens that glanced in the forest and stream; very human allies haste from the skies to aid the heroes of Homer's tales of battle; and the marble statues that glowed in the shrines of the temples and lined the Greek streets tell what the average Greek would hardly have been surprised to meet in the flesh. Had he not been brought up on the stories of incarnation? and here was the story in marble. That scene in Acts, of the hill-town in Asia Minor, where the two apostles were taken, the old man for Zeus, and the young man for Hermes, and barely escaped from the sacrifice offered them, — and then barely escaped being sacrificed, — is, doubtless, a glimpse of the mind of ten thousand towns of the time. And what shall we say to the apotheosis of the Roman emperors as another glimpse at the incarnation capacities of the time in which Christianity rose? It has been described as a "popular religion" of the provinces in the second century, — that deification of the man who as emperor embodied the power and the majesty of Rome, the God-man of Rome, with altars and temples and priesthoods dedicated to him.

THE BIRTH-STORY OF CHRISTENDOM'S GOD-MAN.

And now we must come to our own Christian religion, which, *because* it is a lofty religion, has emphasized as no other religion on earth has done this man-likeness of God. Even when we name God "Our Father," we humanize him. But it is only a small part of Christendom that, outside of the prayer of Jesus, prays to "Our Father" by name, — so small a part that, practically, we may say, *The God of Christendom is a man.*

How came it to be so? The half-familiar story can be told in three years or three moments. Shall we try to hint it once more in the moment way? It is a story of the meeting and blending of two great rivers of thought. One was the Jewish dream of a *Christ*, a Prophet-king, who would deliver the people from the oppressor, and lift them up to righteousness and glory, and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. It was the old national dream, springing from the older and deathless faith that the Jews were God's "chosen people." The other stream of thought was Greek. All around Jewry lay the bright Greek world. That world, too, had its old religion; but in the time of Jesus the old faiths were dying and dropping from the mind, like brown leaves from the trees of November. In their place monotheistic philosophies were rising; and one idea among the Greek thinkers was that God creates all things by his *Logos*, his Living Word. It is easy to think of a word as projected outside of the uttering mind, and having operant force of its own; easy from this to personify that word as living; easy, then, if it be God's Word, to conceive of it as a secondary God, acting as Creator, Inspirer, and Providence. We ought not to find the idea hard to understand, if we think we understand our Emerson's phrase, "The good laws are *alive*," or his line, "And *conscious law* is king of kings." This Logos idea for the Greek had its rise in old Platonic and Stoic sources; but Philo, the Greek-minded Jew of Alexandria, living when Jesus lived, gave it clearest expression and vogue. Now, when Paul bore Christianity out into the Greek world, — thereby saving it from being a tiny Jewish sect of which we might never have heard, — the "Christ" he preached was already in his mind a being far above a merely Jewish Christ. He was a new Adam, the Image of God, a

universal Christ. And Greeks who heard of this Christ soon began to say, "This is no other than our Creative Word of God *made flesh*, and come on the earth as man." So Jewish "Christ" and Greek "Word" began to blend into one being, and in that blending the God of Christendom was born. *In that blending the God of Christendom was born.* The Jew had furnished the human, the Greek had furnished the divine, element; the Jew furnished the ethical, the Greek the functional, element; the Jew furnished the historic and the temporal, the Greek furnished the transcendent and eternal element of the new god. Jew gave him body, Greek gave him soul. The figure is Jew, the transfiguration is Greek. Son of Man, Jew, — Son of God, Greek. An august ancestry! And both parts were essential to the "incarnation."

The Gospel of John, so called, the Greek Gospel of the four, and the latest written, is the biography of this new Jesus. It is one of the books of the world's unsparable scripture, but we seek in vain in it for a Sermon on the Mount or for parables of the kingdom of heaven. Its emphasis is not, as in them, on morals and life, but on the person of the Christ, the Word and Light of God, that "lighteth every man who cometh into the world," and that at last took flesh and dwelt among men, full of grace and glory. As years went by, the emphasis upon the person of the Christ grew greater. John's Gospel shows the thought as it was, perhaps, about the year 125. Justin Martyr, a generation later than that, expands the thought a little, dwelling more than John upon the spiritual and essential Christ, of whom every race partakes: Abraham and Socrates, for instance, were Christians in virtue of the indwelling Christ, to whom they were obedient. The year 200 comes, and the word "*trias*" — a little later, in Tertullian's Latin, *trinitas* — is dropping into Christian theology, though

as yet with a very embryonic meaning; and Clement is teaching that Christ is the immanent God enstructured in the constitution of the world, enstructured in the human soul, — redemption being the progressive education of the human race by this indwelling teacher. The year 250, or thereabouts, brings Origen with his momentous and far-reaching phrase, "the eternal generation of the Son." It brings Sabellius, teaching that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are but three forms or aspects of the One. And it brings into Christian theology, but only to be repudiated at this time, the star-word *homoousios*. And the year 325 brings the Council of Nicæa, in which the doctrine of the Trinity flowers almost full-calyxed, and *homoousios* ("same-natured," "consubstantial") becomes the test of orthodoxy; and Christ is henceforth "very God of very God." Yet the Trinity was but a midway point in the mighty speculation! What is the nature of the Christ? How is he perfect man, yet perfect God? has he two natures, or but one? Has he two wills, or only one? Over such problems the Greek Christian world thought and wrote and quarrelled for three centuries more. Council after council met to settle them, and met in vain.

OUR COMMENT: (1) THE INCARNATION A BLESSED FAITH FOR THAT TIME'S NEED.

And what is our comment on this birth-story of Christendom's God, so much more wondrous to thought than the shining Christmas stories that make the pearl-gate to the Gospels, — what is our comment to-day, after fifteen hundred years, and in the light of the evolution idea? The comment looks in two directions. One way is this: Be the doctrine what we call true or what we call false, it is well for the world that Athanasius won the field of Nicæa. Well, for three reasons at least: —

(1) His triumph *made God real,* the Infinite, Absolute, Unknown God, — no less being than that, — real, — real as a person, real as sandals on feet and tunic on body and look in the eyes and words from the lip could make him; real, too, as a Goodness; real, too, as Love.

> "The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great were the All-Loving, too, —
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power, nor mayst conceive of mine,
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me who have died for thee!'
> The madman saith He said so: it is strange."

So writeth Browning's "Karshish": so say we with him, "strange"; and, fact or not, a blessed faith for that time's need. It was an immense equipment of faith for Europe to start on the stormy centuries that followed the break-up of the Roman Empire with a good God as solid-sure as incarnation had made him.

(2) Athanasius' victory made the *unity of God and man real.* This was in truth the great point at issue, the unity of God and man, not the unity of God with Christ as an individual. Men often fight, as they build, better than they know. The Christ was very man of very man, as well as very God of very God. In him the *whole race stood,* when the signers at Nicæa signed their names below that word *homoousios,* "consubstantial," — God and Son of God one in their nature. It is really much more to say *one with* than *like to.* It takes one into the family: it is the difference between the kin and the guest. And that is a difference almost worth quarrelling over. Had Arius triumphed, man as represented in Christ would have stood outside of God's being, the guest of his welcome, not the child of his

inmost nature. Again, we must own, it was a great equipment for faith to enter the stormy centuries of Europe's remaking with this fact — God and man one — locked fast in its creed. Even if the casket were as seldom unlocked for inspection of contents as the shrine that held the bone of a saint, the bone, the sacred fact, was there, dimly believed in, some day to kindle with resurrection.

A third gain should be credited to the incarnation belief, though perhaps an Arian victory would have been as good as the Athanasian for *this* end: the belief in the incarnation of God in Christ has made it forever impossible that any character less good than that of Jesus should be accepted as symbol of Christendom's God. The Father *must* be as good as the Son, and we know *he* was good. The Father must be as good as the Son whom we know. The words are simple, the thought is deep and far-reaching; for to make God as good as his saints is to put the axe to the root of a good many dogmas.

(2) THE INCARNATION A KINDERGARTEN STORY.

This, then, is half of our comment. It is well for the world that Christendom's God was born as the God-man. The other half of our comment is this: that the whole story is a *kindergarten* story. The great central doctrine of Christendom, God incarnate in Christ, is but an *object-lesson* in the kindergarten of faith. It puts a vast truth in the concrete form in which minds can most readily take it. The vaster a fact, the more we need the symbol, the type, the object-lesson, to represent it. If the symbol is not given us, we make one for ourselves, — we as individuals, we as the race. It is another psychological law, akin to the law with whose statement this paper began. You remember Tennyson's

words, touching this very theme of ours in his musical way: —

"Where truth in closest words shall fail,
The truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

"Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

. . . . . .

"See, thou that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type."

IS THE INCARNATION BELIEF A MISTAKE, THEN?

Is this saying that the central dogma of Christendom is an error, — an age-long, world-wide mistake? *Yes*, if the object-lesson be taken as literal history, or as the whole of the fact, its rounded and final statement. So is any kindergarten story an error, taken in that way. If *not* taken so, then *no*, not a mistake. The trouble is that of our theologies we like not to say "kindergarten," whereas theology is nothing *but* kindergarten statements. That, when we know it, is what makes it safe to have a theology. Till we do know it, it hardly is safe, though inevitable. And certainly too long, and too widely still, Christendom's kindergarten story has been taken to cover literally, and cover the whole of, the fact of incarnation. Even where it is not so taken, the advent of the God-man as unique historic fact there in Palestine, eighteen

centuries since, is the centre of faith as held by many of the wisest and best that we know, — by such men as Phillips Brooks, to name one for type. By no means does a man like Brooks hold that Christ was the whole of the incarnation. Most of the thoughtful orthodox theologians are saying to-day, I suppose, that the incarnation not only revealed God to man, but *man* to *himself*, — *his* oneness in nature with God. They are making return to the Gospel of Origen, Clement, Justin, and John, — that the same Word that took flesh in Jesus is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It is the old Stoic gospel of the immanent God, the *pre*-Christian gospel, which they are returning to with stress and delight. It is saying much the same thing to say that a new Christ is emerging in Orthodoxy, the human within the divine. It is Christ the All-Manly, Christ the All-Brotherly. "All-manly" means character: "All-brotherly" means daily service. And more than ever his true worship is felt to be imitation. "*Be* a Christ! Everything is summed up in that," cries Mr. Stead; and many an orthodox heart amens. None the less, rather all the more, in virtue of this participation in incarnation by men, allowed by the new Orthodoxy, is it true, as we were reminded last night, that the orthodox theology is becoming more and more Christo-centric. And this means that the Palestinian incarnation is still held as centre of faith by those wisest and best just referred to. So what shall we do? We must choose. The incarnation was either a Palestinian incident, an actual, localized, dated, historic fact, as our friends think it was, or else it is a kindergarten statement of a fact that transcends history, — an object-lesson which the mind of man made for itself at that wonderful era, and in which, hardly knowing, he has ever since faced in rimmed outline a rimless, infinite fact.

Now, just what the light of evolution gives us is the power, to some of us the necessity, of looking at old doctrines in this latter way. It is no longer a question of "error" *versus* "truth." Priestley, a hundred years ago, could treat of the dogmas that rose around the Sermon on the Mount and its preacher as the "corruptions" of Christianity. *We* cannot speak that way. The Nicene Creed rose as naturally — I would almost say, as grandly — in the mind of man as the Beatitudes rose in his heart. Jesus would have been amazed at it, to be sure; but bring him across the years, set him down in the Darwin century, train him a bit in its thought, then bid him look back to Alexandria and Nicæa and their incarnation-feat over his memory, and I think he would have recognized that feat's true nature, — *parable work!* He was a great kindergartner himself in his method; and living in our time would he not know an object-lesson in history, when he saw one? In every case — is that any too strong a statement? — in every case where an old orthodox doctrine differs from the later form of that doctrine, the earlier form is the concrete, dramatic "object-lesson," the "kindergarten" form of the truth aiming at statement, while our later form is some larger statement of the same fact or law, of which the object-lesson now appears as parable or symbol; *now* appears, — of course it did not so appear then, when men first wrought it in a glad sincerity as the verity of God. It is thus with the Incarnation doctrine, thus with Vicarious Atonement, thus with Original Sin, thus with Election, thus with all the old dogmas of Christendom, formulated three hundred, or fifteen hundred years, ago. In each and every case the difference between the earlier and the later form is not so much the difference between error and truth as men have been wont to think. It is much more the differ-

ence between the concrete and the universal, the illustration and the law. No: the true name for Orthodoxy is *not* "Error" any more than it is "Right-thinking." It is no good omen for Unitarianism when Unitarians break into applause over bright slurs upon Orthodoxy. Is that all the *acumen* we have, — not to say, all the heart?

I hardly know whether orthodox friends, however, will like the word "kindergarten" better than "error." It sounds less hostile, but more patronizing; and patronage is harder to forgive than hostility. And yet I suspect that many of them, so expansive is their own thought to-day, will thank you for suggesting it. It covers the case as they themselves recognize the case; that is, it is a word that leaves their old thought *true*, but their new thought *truer*, — this the large of which that was the small. And we all like to find we have grown, so long as we don't have to call our childhood an "error." So I recommend you to try the word — *gently*. I have tried it, and really thought it gave some orthodox friends relief. It is psychological and therefore illuminating.

THE LARGER AND TRUER FORM OF THE INCARNATION BELIEF, — GOD INCARNATE IN MAN.

The crown of my paper ought to be an answer to the question, "What is the larger form of the incarnation thought, of which the Palestinian incarnation is the concrete illustration?" I have short time to hint it.

That object-lesson, be it said, has much work yet to do in the world. Nevertheless, it is beginning to fade by expansion into the larger truth. This larger truth, of course, is *God incarnate in humanity*. It is the old pre-Christian, Stoic truth, *immensely intensified and deepened and ennobled by the eighteen centuries of Chris-*

tendom's object-lesson. I spoke of the help that Orthodoxy is already giving in the new interpretation of the truth, and I cannot but think that its part is destined to be far larger than ours in the beautiful transfiguration; for we are a very small body, and will be, I think, if true to our principles. They should still, and forever, lead onward, and give us our home, as before, among visions that must *wait* to be popular. But in simplest truth we may say that the larger incarnation is the central truth of Unitarianism, even as the smaller incarnation has been the central truth of the older Christianity; and that no *one* soul in modern time has been so eminent a prophet of this grander meaning as our own Channing. The distinctive faith of Unitarianism has never been its thought of God, although that gives us name: it has been our thought of man. It is our faith in the dignity of human nature. When this faith in the dignity of human nature comes full circle, it is faith in the intellectual and moral unity of God and man. It thus rounds again into a thought of God, and gives us back the incarnation doctrine in nobler form than ever, — God incarnate in humanity, not merely in the one man Jesus. This, I suppose, is what Dr. Hedge had in mind when he said that Unitarianism would better have been named "Humanitarianism." It certainly is the faith which Channing calls his "one sublime idea." "One sublime idea has taken hold of my mind: it is the greatness of the soul, its divinity, its union with God by spiritual likeness." "In ourselves are elements of the divinity." "All minds are of one family." One could quote passage after passage: it is Channing's constant emphasis. Emerson has it, of course, at the height of his ethical rapture. "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God: the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God, do enter into that man with justice."

God incarnate in man, in humanity! Break the thought into syllables. This very *body* of ours, its blood and its bone and its mystic nerve, the holy microcosm to his macrocosm; our *mind* thinking out his thoughts inbreathed, inspired, in us, — he the Raphael behind Raphael, the Newton behind Newton, the Edison behind Edison; his justice, his right, organizing itself in the instincts of *conscience*, the whispers and thunders of *ought;* he becoming incarnate in Garrison, incarnate in Frances Willard and their armies of followers, incarnate in myriads of saints hung upon many a cross; his heart of *love* beating in mothers and fathers and children, making two one the wide world over of life, and out of the oneness again repeopling his worlds; and waking in hearts here and there "love for every unloved creature, lonely, poor, or small," and so setting new ideals, new incarnations of love, at work in the world. "In thy face have I seen the Eternal," said dying Bunsen, looking up in the face of his wife bending over him. He spoke for millions of living. "God could not be everywhere, so he made mothers," said the old Jewish proverb with splendid audacity, voicing the fact of his incarnation that way. In the "Bonnie Briar Bush" book you remember how the poor girl comes home from her wayward London life to her hard, proud, righteous, heart-broken father in the home in the Highlands, and how she afterwards says to Marget, the wise woman-friend who sent for her, hinting the broken heart, — "It iss a peety you hef not the Gaelic," Flora said: "it iss the best of all languages for loving. There are fifty words for darling, and my father will be calling me every one that night I came home." "Fifty words for darling," and God put them all into just his one Gaelic tongue, an almost dead language at that, and into just a single softened heart. "Fifty words for darling," and the

Father of all trying to utter them every one in his millions of parents.

All this is mystic, is pantheistic, I know. Well, let it be so: the doctrine of incarnation is always mystic, often verges on pantheism, whether that be a bad or a good thing; and this is the new-old doctrine of incarnation, God in humanity. I know, too, that there is the fact of evil in man, and the conundrum waiting in ambush, Is the good God incarnate in evil? I shall just pass it by for now, only turning in passing toward the evolution thought that has light to throw on that problem. This new-old form of the doctrine calls incarnation continuous, progressive, ascendant, as well as universal. It recognizes *grades* of projection of the "Word" into the visible flesh. It recognizes lower and higher. The brute and the cousins below him, the angel and the cousins above him, come into the scope of the plan. It takes all nature, all history, and all of humanity to reveal the whole of the God. One can insist, if he will, on a foolish question, "But who *best* embodies the God?" And the answer for us, being human, of course is, The best man or best woman, — if you know the name. But you do not, for we do not know all God has done and is doing in history; and, therefore, any specific and emphasized answer is foolish. But with this question answered or not, the great fact is, — incarnation universal, continuous, perpetual, progressive. The true Church of the Incarnation is the Church of All Souls.

This is *human theology*. To-day there is a conscious, deliberate, scientific exploration of human nature to find man; and the result of the exploration is also the discovery of God. Of this human theology the poets as yet are the best interpreters. It is good to rise above differing doctrines to poetry that solves doctrines and makes them as one, to poetry that knows doctrines to

be lower forms of itself. The old theology argued too often, or tried to, from God to man: this human theology argues from man to the God. We find it of old in Jesus, who argued in both ways. We can find it to-day in the prose of professors and preachers. But we find it, perhaps, at its clearest in simple verses like Whittier's or Blake's. And who can forget the sounding rhythms of Browning, his "Saul," and how the argument climbs at the end, proving God's love from the man's?

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, — the end, what Began? . . .
Would *I* suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou, — so wilt Thou!
So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown —
And Thy love fill infinitude wholly! . . .
'T is the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek, and I find it! O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

It is the boy-prophet's vision of the God who in the deeps of his nature is Infinite Man, his chant of the incarnation forever potential.

But we close with words that are simpler and larger still, — verses that once I found at the end of Theodore Parker's last sermon, the one in which he told, "What Religion may Do for a Man." With these in his heart he turned, and left his people, and died. The verses were not printed with the sermon, — perhaps strength did not allow him to read them; but there they wait in the manuscript, attesting a thought to have them his last words. They are by William Blake, "the mad poet," whose sanity named them

The Divine Image.

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart;
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine;
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine, —
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In Heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling, too.

CHANNING'S NOTE BOOK

Passages from the Unpublished Manuscripts of William Ellery Channing. Selected by his granddaughter, Grace Ellery Channing

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 110; price, 50 cents *net;* postage, 5 cents.

THE origin and character of this book add to the interest of the contents, in that the "Notes" of which it is made up are from the unpublished manuscripts left by Channing. They have been carefully gathered, and are here given without revision or change of any kind. The desire to preserve their integrity has resulted in the retention of the incomplete sentences and abrupt constructions of the original, which were written for purposes of personal reference. This is more than atoned for, however, in the vigor and freedom of expression, and the entire absence of self-restraint, which bring one into closer touch with the characteristics of Channing's thought and character. The Notes are not at all theological in character or treatment, and for that reason they present in this form another and broader view of Channing himself.

PRAYERS

By Theodore Parker. With a Preface by Louisa M. Alcott, and a Memoir by F. B. Sanborn

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 218; price, 75 cents *net;* postage, 7 cents.

"IT is in the very spirit of devotion, the gentle or the martial, that these prayers were conceived and uttered. Like so many of his predecessors in the New England pulpit, Theodore Parker was 'mighty in prayer.' It was the natural language of his soul."—*Mr. Sanborn, in his* MEMOIR.

"Parker's prayers were one of the strongest attractions of his church, and did much to win and soften souls, after his unsparing hand had torn away the veil behind which so many hide even from themselves. Like spring rains on newly plowed fields, came mercy after justice. . . . Perhaps the secret of the worth and beauty of these prayers lies in the fact that his life illustrated them so truly that those who knew him felt he had a right to pray."—*Miss Alcott, in the* PREFACE.

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FOUNDER OF CHRISTENDOM

By Goldwin Smith

Size, 5 1-8 x 7 1-2; pages, 44; price, 50 cents *net;* postage, 4 cents.

THIS little book is remarkable as the clear, concise, and masterful presentation of the character and mission of the Founder of Christianity from the point of view of an eminent historian. Without religious bias, with unprejudiced interpretation of facts, by a calm logic that does not suffer shipwreck on a sunken theological reef, the author, known on two continents for his scholarly attainments, presents to us a view of the Man of Galilee that wins by the charm of its simple, human, and rational appeal. Here we see a man of commanding nobility stripped of ecclesiastical glamour, a leader who leads through the power of triumphant virtue and unselfish consecration to a great work, as drawn by one who, in sympathy with his intense humanity, looks upon the Nazarene as the highest type yet achieved by the race. It is not too much to say that in brief compass one cannot find a more sane, helpful, and really inspiring interpretation of a life so potent throughout the centuries.

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THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

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[No. 104]

LET US PRAY.

BY

CHARLES G. AMES.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

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(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

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LET US PRAY.

Prayer is about the last subject one would willingly treat with rude or reckless freedom; for it reaches into the realm of sacred mysteries, and concerns the most intimate relations between man and his Maker. If such a subject needs to be cleared of hurtful misconceptions, the process must be something like the surgery which ventures to cut away false growths near to the heart. Yet, for the heart's own sake, the knife cannot always be spared.

We have all become suspicious that our traditional ways of thinking about religious matters, as about most other human affairs, need to be overhauled or re-examined, and cleared of unreal and irrational elements. We owe no more respect to religious nonsense than to any other. Yet in no department of thought does error grow so rankly. The more fertile the soil, the more abundant the product, whether of wholesome plants or of useless and poisonous weeds. Precisely because the spiritual part of our nature is like a rich tropical garden, it is liable to be infested and choked with all sorts of tare and tangle. The very ground is sacred; but it does not follow that it will produce only what is fair and comely. To give the good seed a fair chance, we must remove the cumbersome and obstructing growths of rant, cant, superstition, and absurdity. Can we do this necessary work with firmness, yet with tender

carefulness, so as not to root up the nobler plants of reverence, trust, and duty? You must have observed that when a man hates error more than he loves truth, he is apt to treat both with a kind of roughness, like the deacon whose minister described him to me as "violently all right."

But to many minds this is the puzzling problem: Is there any room for prayer in the natural order? or are we to expect interferences with the natural order? Professor Tyndall thought that light might be thrown on this question by methods of science, or by a careful observation of facts. For instance, when one farmer puts seed into the ground, and prays for a good crop, and another puts seed into the ground with never a thought of God, we might observe whether the praying farmer gets a larger harvest. In some of the churches, prayers are offered for deliverance from sudden death. When there is a railway collision or a loss of life by shipwreck, we might observe whether Providence distinguishes between those who have offered this prayer and those who have not. The test is not exactly modern. In an ancient temple of Neptune the priest showed to a visitor the votive offerings which had been brought by grateful sailors who had come safe to land. "But," said the skeptical visitor, "I see no offerings from those who prayed to the god, and yet perished in the waves."

Every year in some part of the world there is a drought, and sometimes prayers are offered for rain. Sooner or later the rain always comes, whether prayers are offered or not. The prophet Elijah lived nine hundred years before Christ. A Jewish legend, repeated in the Christian Scriptures, tells us that "he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. He prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

In that case the greater miracle would seem to be that anybody could have lived so long without water or food. The theory of the legend was that the withholding of rain was a punishment for the sins of the people; but a greater prophet than Elijah has taught us that the heavenly Father "maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust."

Prayer has often been regarded as a sort of last resort in human extremity. Because God is "a very present help in trouble," we forget that he is also a present help in joy and prosperity. A Portuguese proverb says, "He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea." It is true that in hours of helpless weakness we are recalled to our dependence. When a sick man was exhorted to turn his thoughts toward God, he replied, "The doctor says I am getting better." A little boy was wont to say at night,

> "Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

but he excused himself from saying any morning prayer, because in the daytime he could take care of himself. An active business man explains his indifference to religion by saying, "I have never been hurt enough."

These anecdotes may illustrate the spiritual uses of adversity; but they also show the danger of falling into a miserable, sneaking selfishness, which tries to use God as a willing pauper uses the charity office. So, between superstition and selfishness, prayer has suffered, and man has wronged himself by his very devotions.

Many have given up prayer, or they think they have given it up. They reason, off-hand, in this way: "If sincere, it is a childish delusion; if insincere, it is a hideous hypocrisy." Do these conclusions apply to real prayer, or only to a confusing and irrational theory?

Certainly, if we think of prayer as a means of moving God or of producing any change in the laws of the world,

we shall give it up as soon as we come to our senses. Let us frankly admit that much of our praying has no rational use or meaning; that millions of petitions are never answered; that no answer is expected or even wished; and that the people who offer certain forms of prayer would be half scared to death if taken at their word.

The Creator does not need any information from his creatures. "He knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him," is the teaching of Jesus. Did Paul forget this when he said, "Let your requests be *made known* to God?" Perhaps, like the rest of us, he dropped into the use of language which is true to the simple mind of a child, and which indeed contains no dangerous error. To the child or to the philosopher nothing is more natural or more helpful than the unbosoming of the deepest thoughts, feelings, and desires in the presence of trusted sympathy, human or divine.

But neither does the Creator need to be persuaded by our human pleadings. Is not the Perfect Goodness more willing to give than we are to take? Are we not continually dealt with by a generosity which is above all we ask or think? Yet a part of that generosity — perhaps the greater part of it — comes in the form of those inspirations which waken our aspirations. "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord." To cultivate our own receptivity by cherishing and expressing right desires may be a necessary condition of good living. One sign of life is the power to take in. Vitality is absorbing. To live and grow, the tree must continually ask and receive from the sun and earth and air. In this sense, to pray is as natural as to breathe. We hardly need ask whether prayer can be used instead of an umbrella or a sunshade, or as a motive power to drive machinery, or to bring customers to one's shop, or

to set broken bones, or to win worldly advantages. But is there not some true and reasonable sense in which we may speak of man as asking and God as giving? We ask and receive from each other, and do not feel it to be any disturbance of law and order. Are our relations with God less real? May we not think of prayer as a movement of our own minds in harmony with the nature of things, in harmony with law, reason, and experience?

Well, we live in a very large universe; we live in an order so varied that a great many different things may be true. We have learned that in nature there are forces which work in exactly opposite directions without conflict,

> "As sunbeams stream through liberal space,
> And nothing justle or displace."

Gravity, electricity, heat, wind, may operate within the same space and at the same time, downward, upward, sidewise, and in every direction, without a jar. While these physical forces are active within their spheres, the powers and passions of the human mind may be equally active and equally masterful. The love of liberty and knowledge, the love of wealth and power, the love of God and man, may all find room in the same mind, and may also work outwardly in the world, creating societies, systems of industry and trade, civilizations, and institutions of religion. There is room, then, for the play of more than one kind of force. It is also possible to make the lower forces and laws subservient to the higher.

The order in which we live is large enough and free enough to permit an endless system of exchanges. Among all creatures, intelligent and unintelligent, there is something which is very much like asking and giving. Our human life is full of it. It is the richness of our experience. But asking and giving are figurative expressions. We need not use them in the coarse, literal, and childish

sense; but we may use them, like all metaphorical language, as a ladder on which thought may climb to a high spiritual meaning, or as symbols which stand for something finer and truer than we can put into words.

We are only receivers; everything we have or can have is given. We exist under a law of dependence; for the power we call our own is itself a continuous gift. This means, and must mean, that we are related to some helping Power which is superior to ourselves. It means, and must mean, that we are in perpetual contact and connection with that Power. But many forms of benefit are given to us only on compliance with some condition. We receive if we comply; we do not receive if we do not comply. Does this conditional state of things imply chance or change in the order? No; it means that this is a part of the order, because the order is large enough for the movement of all the forces, physical and spiritual, human and divine.

One condition of receiving is that we must apply in the right way, or, as one may say, at the right office. For example, we apply to the resources of nature for our daily food. All mankind cannot create a particle. The farmer creates nothing; the hunter and fisherman, the butcher and baker, create nothing. All human industry is simply an application for help. It complies with fixed conditions, and the universal Providence does the rest. Every process of cultivating, transporting, or preparing food is simply a reaching out of man's hand to take what is freely given. Industry, like hunger, is the body's prayer for daily bread. Unless we ask or apply, we do not receive. There is a high sense in which the hand which toils moves the hand that moves the world. "To labor is to pray."

But man does not live by bread alone. He is capable of a higher life than the body's; he is endued with a deeper sense of need, a finer kind of hunger. There is a

realm of outward nature in which the body lives and is subject to physical laws and necessities; there is a grander realm in which man lives as a mind and is subject to spiritual laws and necessities.

Here, too, man is simply a receiver, — a conditional receiver. He cannot create the truth which his mind requires to make him wise, nor the love which his affections require to make him good and glad, nor the strength which his will requires to make him righteous. He is just as dependent for these spiritual supplies as for his daily food.

Now we have found a reason for faith. Unless the universe is ordered on a false and deceitful plan, and unless our own being is a wretched mockery, there must be as ample provision to meet our nobler needs as to meet our bodily wants. Our relations with the ever-giving Providence through external nature are no more real than our relations with the ever-giving Providence through our mental and moral faculties. Then we may reasonably conclude that the condition upon which our spiritual wants may be met will be analogous to those by which our bodily supplies are provided. In both cases we must ask, seek, knock; that is, we must put ourselves in the way to receive. To apply for help by complying with the conditions upon which help is given, — this is the essence of prayer. For the bodily supplies we reach outward; for the spiritual supplies we reach inward. In either case, our desires and expectations turn toward the Invisible. The divine generosity meets us in the resources of nature to satisfy our bodily hunger; the same divine generosity meets us in the resources of truth and grace to satisfy our aspirations.

For one precious moment, let us try to think of the supreme and universal Spirit as an exhaustless source of wisdom, or truth; of goodness, or love; and of righteous

will-power, or purity. Then let us inquire, How can that wisdom come into our understanding, that goodness into our affections, that righteousness into our will?

I hold it just as impossible for a man to increase in wisdom, love, or righteousness, without receiving something from the deeper Source, as that his bodily powers should be increased without nourishment. The child weighing ten pounds cannot become a man weighing a hundred and fifty pounds without taking a hundred and forty pounds of new material. We say he grows, — as if that were the simplest thing in the world! Yes; but he grows by receiving; he grows by compliance with conditions; he grows because he is alive and shares the nature of the things he feeds upon. There must be a corresponding provision by which he receives truth, love, and moral power out of the infinite supply.

In childhood, when I heard a blessing asked at the table, I wondered if God did something just then to the food, — if he worked some miracle of transubstantiation, making the bread and meat more fit for human use. In later years it grew clear to me that when food is received in that grateful, cheerful, and companionable spirit which favors both good digestion and mental elevation, it may yield a double blessing. By reminding us of our dependence and of the divine generosity, it may nourish the mind as well as the body. And in considering the processes by which we procure, prepare, appropriate, and enjoy our daily bread, I see now an illustration of the whole method of intercourse between God and man. We continually take, by thought and industry, what he gives in wisdom and love. We are ever asking and receiving, seeking and finding; and because he lives we live also. Whether we realize it or not, our life, like Christ's, is hid in God.

Prayer is not a magical method of securing blessings,

temporal or spiritual; and we are not to look for magical answers. We are simply to put ourselves in the attitude or inward condition which makes it possible for benefits to come. This implies no change in the law; it means, simply, that we conform and keep step to the music of the universe.

Indeed, the more we know of natural law, the more surely we trust ourselves to its keeping; the more confidently we appeal to its provisions; the more largely we draw upon its resources. Thus we learn to pray without ceasing; for life itself becomes a prayer. Our souls seek the true, the beautiful, and the good, as our eyes seek the light. We ask after the love of God and the will of God as we ask for the companionship and sympathy of our friends. We get what we desire when our desire is in harmony with what is best.

"According to your faith, so will it be unto you," is the doctrine of Jesus. If we expect only what is rightfully ours, we cannot expect too much. We grow more susceptible to impressions as we yield to them. There are fine forces and influences which enter into our being whenever our thoughts, affections, and choices make us receptive. Our passions are calmed; our troubles are soothed; our vision is cleared; we feel the attraction of heavenly powers and pure spirits; our faculties are invigorated; we are bathed in soft waves of light and peace.

There are some who tell us that prayer is merely an invocation or address to one's self, — a kind of spiritual gymnastic exercise. Well, this might be useful. But a little reflection shows that even bodily exercise does not *create* strength. The athlete draws in more force from nature by using what he has. His practice is a kind of prayer; it is the expression of his desire. It is not necessary to think of God as sitting in the sky, and bending to listen to our requests, and then sending down what we

ask. The whole transaction may take place in a man's own mind, and yet it may be a transaction with the Power by which he lives. For I think God is as truly present and active within us as in any part of his creation.

"Every inward aspiration is His angel undefiled;
And in every 'O my Father!' sleeps the answer, 'Here, my child!'"

The spirit of Jesus is the spirit of prayer. We cannot know what took place in the solitude of his own mind when he turned away from the haunts of men to be alone with the Father. I cannot believe that he spent the midnight hours in agonizing pleadings and wrestlings, as if he would overcome some unwillingness in the mind of God. It seems more likely that he was listening for instruction, that he was absorbed in contemplation, that he was submitting his whole being to the influences of that unseen Spirit which flooded him with such wonderful light and love and power and peace. We might learn from him that communion with God — coming into some share of the divine qualities — is the truest prayer.

Oh, if we half believed, would not our whole souls lie open to the sunshine and warmth of heaven? But as we have eyes and do not see because we do not look, as we have ears and do not hear because we do not listen, as we have minds and yet are low in intelligence because we are not thoughtful and studious, so we have a religious nature and yet remain unspiritual because we give so little *attention* to the greatest of all realities. A thousand vanishing spectacles blind our eyes to the heavenly vision. A thousand rattling sounds make us deaf to the one still, small voice which alone can teach the true wisdom.

If we are confirmed in a habit of mental distraction, even the outward forms of worship may be a part of our worldliness.

Just as a good night of rest prepares us for a good day

of toil, so may a season of withdrawal and meditation prepare us for the better discharge of our social and secular obligations. We greatly need more calmness, self-possession, serenity; and if we find these blessings on the mount, we shall bring them down into the valley. Then the spirit of prayer will mix with our common moods, and hallow our common pursuits. We shall learn to ask for wisdom and guidance, just as the seaman watches the constellations and studies the chart of his voyage. We shall seek our spiritual exercises and comforts, just as we go every morning to our tasks and return every evening to the shelter of our homes. We shall ask forgiveness and inward cleansing, just as we would wash our hands or brush the dust from our garments. Then, wherever we rove or rest, the invisible Presence will be as real as the dearest human companionship. But the art of spiritual living requires practice; and the Lord is found only by them that seek him with the whole heart.

"When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that seek him."

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THE

STRICT AND NORMAL HUMANITY

OF

JESUS.

By REV. JOSEPH MAY.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

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THE STRICT AND NORMAL HUMANITY OF JESUS.

The New Testament, *passim*, "CHRIST."

HERE is one of the most impressive syllables that human ears have heard.

Whether in its various phases of significance, in its history as an influence in the world at large, as a spring of comfort and consolation in the private mind of men, or as furnishing a moral and spiritual ideal, the Christ conception has been one of the most remarkable our race has cherished, — perhaps the most remarkable.

That it has been, on the whole, dignified, gracious, beautiful, pure, elevating, no heart could possibly question. That it has even contained and preserved a great truth, an inspiring thought, we must also freely and gratefully admit.

No sensitive mind can contemplate this conception without emotion, without reverence. Whatever be our thoughtful conclusions in regard to it, the subject is to be treated with deepest respect and sympathy, and with the utmost tenderness and delicacy.

But it is obviously one to be studied with a care and thoroughness which shall not only be candid and considerate, but which ought to be rigidly critical. Here, as everywhere, the truth is the one precious thing. We can make in the brief time of a sermon but a most cursory examination of the questions presented by the Christ idea, but some of the main points may be indicated.

The word "Christ" is a direct transcription from the Greek, without change of form except the dropping of a terminal syllable. The Greek was "Christos," which in Latin became "Christus." Its significance is perfectly clear. It was from a verb meaning "to anoint;" so it means "anointed," "an anointed one." In its religious sense the idea is strictly Hebrew; and the Greek term is, in its turn, only a translation of a Hebrew one. This latter was, as expressed in English, "Messiah." It never[1] appears in the Old Testament as a technical term, but is always used in its general significance. Any person might be spoken of as "anointed," "an anointed one;" but of course the term was used of but few. These were especially the high priests[2] and the kings;[3] rarely, but perhaps occasionally, prophets.[4]

In the earlier references, — as in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Samuel, Kings, — the actual mode of consecration to a sacred office, by pouring on consecrated oil, was clearly in view. In this literal sense, no doubt, David, mourning for his valiant captain, Abner, cries out, "I am this day weak, though anointed king" (2 Sam. iii. 39). But, as thus used by the hero king, we see how readily it would pass over to a metaphorical sense, with a more profound suggestiveness. In this sense it was applied to the whole nation of Israel, as chosen and set apart by Yahweh to be his peculiar people, the recipient of especial grace and favor from him. Thus we read in Psalm lxxxiv. 9, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed;" in Psalm lxxxix. 38, "Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed;" and in Habakkuk (iii. 13), "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thine anointed."

[1] Dan. ix. 25 and 26 are corrected in our Revised Version to read "the anointed one."

[2] As Aaron and his sons (Ex. xxx. 22–33; Lev. iv. 3).

[3] 1 Sam. x. 1, xvi. 13. [4] Ps. cv. 15.

In this metaphorical sense the term was also applied to any individual upon whom the spirit of Yahweh seemed to have descended to lay on him a commission. Thus Isaiah (lxi. 1) cries, in the beautiful words which Jesus aptly quoted to describe his own mission, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek." The same prophet (or rather the "great unknown" who two centuries later composed the latter portion of the book which stands under the name of Isaiah) applies the term, metaphorically, to Cyrus, king of Persia, who released the Jews from their bondage in Babylon when he conquered that mighty city (Isa. xlv. 1).

But of course this term was applied to, and at length became the technical title of, that great deliverer to whom in its final decadence the nation looked so eagerly forward. This personage was not distinctly conceived in the period which produced the books, even the latest ones, of the Old Testament; and so, as I have said, the term, "the Messiah," does not appear there in a technical sense. As a high authority says, the Old Testament furnishes, not a fixed doctrine of the Messiah, but the material from which in subsequent times such a doctrine might be drawn.[1] In a word, the idea of the personal Messiah is, as he expresses it, "post-canonical" with reference to the Old Testament. But the "material" was, in a measure, there in the ancient writings, although less abundantly than is commonly supposed. First as the idealized nation, "servant" and "son" of Yahweh; then, more clearly, as a Davidic king of power and glory, who should be raised up and commissioned by Yahweh to restore and aggrandize the nation, and make it master of all others, the conception was shaping itself which in the latest days of discomfiture and despair came to possess the weary hearts of

[1] W. Robertson Smith, Encyclopædia Britannica, article, "Messiah."

Yahweh's people with the vision of a personal Messiah. Buffeted by every nation, oppressed even by his own native princes, Israel lost faith in help of man, and fixed his anxious gaze on the vague but awful features of a deliverer, human, indeed, in nature, but exalted to superhuman dignity, and endowed by Yahweh with his divine commission, and with his power to conquer, to restore, and to rule. In this final, specialized form of the conception the Messiah became the longing of the people, toward which the patriotic hearts of Judah strained with an intensity of which in Christian times the hope of the second advent of Jesus is a reflection, but only a feeble one. All the Messiah's characteristics became the object of minute curiosity and inquiry. The scribes identified each peculiarity of his person and circumstance of his coming. His lineage must needs be that of their royal hero, David. His birthplace was determined from the ancient Scriptures. Day by day, night by night, as their actual fortunes darkened, earnest souls among the Jews watched and waited, intent to suffering, I dare say, for Messiah's approach.

Especially, of course, would this expectation stir and swell when any popular uprising against their oppressors stimulated the national consciousness, and begat a brief hope of independence.

Pretenders there were naturally, — "false Christs," — false, or half true in their own thought, misled by their own dreams, and for a time misleading others. Doubtless every man who promised to be a leader of the people was critically scanned for signs of his realizing the Messianic dream; and on the existence of such signs in him his chief hold upon the people would depend.

The development of the Messianic idea was thus a long process, at which I can now scarcely more than hint. Its final shaping into the expectation of a particular personage was, I would have you see, later than has usually

been supposed or assumed.[1] Our chief testimony to the nature and intensity of the expectation is the New Testament. It may well be (as some of our best modern authorities hold) that much there found is a reflection back upon those times from a later period in which the belief in Jesus as the Messiah had fully established itself among his followers, from whom the New Testament documents come down to us.[2] But it seems to me that enough remains to justify, on the whole, the common view, and to show that the expectation of the Messiah was very general and very intense and alert in the last century of the Jewish State.

It was in just this period that Jesus of Nazareth was born, grew up, and fulfilled his mission.

According to what I have said, we may well believe that, in such a time of unrest and portent and expectation, any individual who felt in himself the stir of great powers, of eager purposes, who seemed to hear a divine call within his soul summoning him to prophethood and leadership among his people, could hardly escape or decline the — at least tentative — application to himself of the Messianic hope. It was to be a commission laid upon some one of the sons of men; it might be he as well as another. Piety, as much as ambition, would suggest it to his thoughts.

Hence that story in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew of Jesus's confidential inquiry of his disciples whom the people thought him to be, with Simon Peter's confident answer that he believed him to be the Messiah, while, on the whole, I think it probably a myth, is doubtless (as a genuine myth always is) a fairly just illustration of the

[1] The technical title "Messiah" first occurs, in fact, in the so-called "Psalter of Solomon," a work which appeared soon after the taking of Jerusalem by Pompey, or about the middle of the century preceding our era.

[2] Kuenen's "Religion of Israel," chap. xii.; Carpenter's 'Synoptic Gospels."

actual facts of the time. It presents Jesus in a light too unspiritual to make it easily credible of him, in its form; yet the question of his realizing in his own person the Messiah idea might naturally — it must almost inevitably — have arisen within his consecrated mind.

Nor need this thought have been unworthy of a man like Jesus. The profounder his sense of his consecration to the people's regeneration, the more exalted his interpretation of his mission, so much the more earnestly must any son of Israel have scanned the supposed prophecies to assure himself whether or not they testified of him that he had the might and purpose of Yahweh behind him in his efforts.

We must not so idealize Jesus as to dehumanize him and deprive him of naturalness in the workings of his mind. That is not to exalt him, but merely to make him unreal, which belittles him, and impairs his influence and effectiveness. The myth of the Temptation is almost precious as an illustration of and warning against a tendency which is not truly reverent, but is unsound. Jesus's true elevation consists (like that of every noble man) in this: that, while he could feel all the motives of a normal human mind and heart, he characteristically accepted only the highest, only the spiritual ones. This statement is, I think, literally correct, and of historical validity; and it commands from us unlimited admiration and reverence. The text is scarcely, in my judgment, an exaggeration, — "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." I can believe it, because I do not think the fact so wholly exceptional as we are apt to assume in the lives of God's children. There may be, and has been, utter moral fidelity without the exceptional intellectual and spiritual endowments which mark this Master among men.

Certainly we may say of Jesus that there is no trace of a disposition to self-aggrandizement in his biography,

although the record has come to us from, and has passed through, so many and such inferior hands. If he studied his own soul, or even the outward facts of his origin and person, for their testimony to his Messiahship, it was visibly in the spirit of a most pure consecration. And if he accepted the nation's hope as realized in his case, it was to eliminate from the conception all that was mundane, and to give it a moral and spiritual interpretation such as the most exalted prophecy had scarcely hinted, and such as the national consciousness could only, as it did, reject.

But, whether Jesus did or did not apply to himself the Messianic hope, it was, as I have intimated, all but inevitable that any who became his followers should apply it to him. Other similar expectations were also current in that excited, credulous age. The Gospels describe John Baptist as refusing to be considered the Messiah, and choosing rather the character of his forerunner, who was expected to be the prophet Elijah returned to earth, as, even in modern times, great characters have been expected to reappear. That the conviction of his Messiahship controlled the minds of Jesus's immediate disciples, of all others who at all associated themselves with him, and for a time of the populace generally, the record plainly exhibits, even in its myths. Of those who, after following him for a while, "walked no more with him," doubtless most withdrew through disappointment at his delay in realizing the Messiah hope, or from a growing doubt that he was the true deliverer. The apostles were continually on the watch, during his life, for his visible assertion of his title to the office. When, at last, all these hopes were crushed by his arrest and crucifixion, they gave up in despair, and forsook him and fled. When the belief in his return to life cheered again their hearts, it revived also their hope in him as Messiah; and the first question they are represented as asking him, on his reported reunion

with them, was, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?"[1]

Thus in the established notions of his people was laid the foundation of the conception of Jesus as a specially delegated emissary from Deity; and a religious movement which, could it have been kept clear from such influences, would have been a purely spiritual one, was adulterated at its very source with ideas at once mundane, metaphysical, and visionary.

Speculation about Jesus, even in the minds of his very earliest disciples, usurped in large measure the energy of mind and heart which should have gone to understanding and following him as a spiritual leader. Alas, for this latter the time was not ripe! No time has yet been quite ripe for that true discipleship. Our question is whether it is ripe to-day — or we can make it so.

The first generation of Jesus's disciples, then, all Jews, accepted him as, and accepted him because they believed him to be, the Hebrew Messiah, — a purely imaginary personage and a worldly one.

The conviction which Peter is represented to have expressed[2] was that of all who accepted him, — "Thou art the Christ."

The title, as we have seen, was one of specific meaning, and in its first stage implied only that one character, — the Messiah of the Jews.

But the language further ascribed to Peter suggests the first change of significance which the term underwent.

Much time was not given for the endurance of the disciples' hope in its strict Hebrew interpretation.

Jesus's career as a public man was but of a few months', at most of two or three years', duration. Then, as a crucified malefactor, all hope of his outward delivery of the nation was dispersed.

[1] Acts i. 6. [2] Matt. xvi. 16.

But he had taken the deepest hold on his followers' hearts; and, indeed, bereft, forlorn, there was no other leader to whom they could turn. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" the same Peter's despairing ejaculation, expressed their situation and feelings. Such a necessity as theirs, in such an age, was likely to create the source of its own relief. Traditional notions connected with the Messiahship, fragments of Scripture, mysterious words of his own, came to their help, arousing the expectation that after a brief sojourn in the grave their Master would return to life.

On this hope, at least, the disciples fastened with an avidity which, as I have hinted, could hardly but produce its own satisfaction in the supposed fact of his resurrection. The belief in this event spread like wildfire among the hearts of a credulous community, which without it would have been utterly comfortless.

But, after all, while Jesus was believed to have returned to life, it was only in a phantasmal way. He never resumed his place among men as an effective human leader. The practical result of the resurrection myth was to found firmly the conviction of his continued spiritual leadership, and the new interpretation of the idea and title, "the Christ," as implying a world-wide, supernatural commission from Deity to be the healer and Saviour of the nations.

This conception, however, could hardly have been developed along the lines it actually followed, had the Christian movement continued on Jewish soil, in the hands of Jewish disciples. It was Paul, a Jew by birth and education, yet Greek also in association and culture; a man who never saw Jesus; who, except as its opponent, never had more than a very superficial relation to the Jewish-Christian propaganda and its leaders, the original apostles; whose Christianity was more the creation of his own mind and heart than derived from them, — it was Paul who, more

than all others, gave outline and distinctness to the second conception of the Christ.

Paul fully believed, of course, that Jesus realized in its true sense the Hebrew Messiahship;[1] but as he emancipated Christianity from its national restrictions, and made it an inward, not an outward, matter, so he enlarged and spiritualized the idea of the Messiahship of Jesus, so that its first significance rapidly faded, and settled into a subsidiary place in men's thoughts. Jesus as the Christ was to the second generation of converts (mostly Gentile, as they were) not the mere Hebrew deliverer, but the spiritual mediator sent forth by the universal God to be the Saviour of men, reconciling them to himself.

The title which particularly expresses this secondary meaning of the term "Christ" is the "Son of God." In the metaphysical sense which it soon acquired under the influence of Greek modes of thought, the idea which it suggests is not in sympathy with the spirit of Hebraism. As a technical term the phrase was unfamiliar to the Hebrews of an earlier period; it nowhere occurs in the Old Testament.[2]

Angels and exceptional men were sometimes called "sons" of God, but only in the general sense of God's children, or metaphorically, to mark their power or goodness;[3] the nation was sometimes personified as the son of Yahweh;[4] but any idea of sonship to God which even seemed to bridge the infinite chasm between humanity and transcendent Deity would have been, and was, a deep impiety to the Hebrews. It was the true ground of the wholly genuine abhorrence of Jesus and the hostility to him on the part of the priests and people, and was the essence of their charge against him at his trial, that he had professed

[1] Acts xiii. 23, *et seq.*

[2] A single text (Dan. iii. 35) in our English Bible has been amended in the Revised Version so as to remove it.

[3] Gen. vi. 2; Job i. 6, ii. 1. [4] Ex. iv. 22; Hosea xi. 1.

to be the Son of God, and had by calling God his Father arrogated to himself some sort of equality with the Deity, who to the Hebrews at all periods was so utterly exalted above all other beings as to have no generic relation to any.

Yet, as I have said, Hebraism had admitted a metaphorical fatherhood in Deity; and Jesus had actually made this fatherhood literal and real in his exquisite representations of God. Probably, indeed, the idea had germinated among the more spiritual of his predecessors. The title, "Son of God," while it is said to be nowhere found in pre-Christian literature, would appear, from Paul's familiar use of it, to have been current in the Jewish schools as a designation of the Messiah. In some such manner, at any rate, the way had been prepared for that belief in Jesus as in a special and exalted sense "the Son" of God which appears throughout the Gospels, — perhaps tentatively more often than positively, — which rapidly developed after his death, and which the title "Christ," the anointed one, henceforth peculiarly suggested.[1]

This double conception of Jesus as the Hebrew Messiah and the Son of God occupied and inspired the mind of Paul. The progress of his thought, by which the metaphysical idea of the Son replaced in emphasis the popular notion of the Messiah, appears pretty plainly in his Epistles.[2] Jesus, as its illustration and cynosure, must

[1] From the tenor of the first three Gospels it would appear almost certain that Jesus did not apply to himself the title "Son of God," although not refusing it when applied to him by others. He preferred the title "Son of man," which is, however, strictly Messianic, and was, no doubt, chosen by him for that reason.

The Fourth Gospel cannot confidently be cited on any biographical point, not merely for its late and unknown origin, but because it is written with a purpose to which all its facts are made to conform. It is properly a tract designed to show that Jesus was the Son of God and the Logos. It is, of course, highly valuable to illustrate a certain stage and mode of Christian belief.

[2] See E. H. Hall's "Orthodoxy and Heresy," p. 24, *et seq.*

take on an expanded dignity corresponding to that enlarged view of the nature and mission of Christianity which Paul originated and propagated. The apostle's view rapidly developed to the idea of a being, still human in nature, and certainly never in the least confused with Deity, but idealized and exalted to the highest conceivable plane of quality and function, and whom indwelling Godhead filled to the utmost measure of his capacity. Rabbinical lore and Gnostic metaphysics united to engage a mind constitutionally lacking in poetic imaginativeness, yet, as such minds often are, none the less prone to them, in speculations which now seem crude and vain, but of which no language was too high-strained to express the outcome. In his sublimest passages Paul continually and emphatically refers to Jesus as man,[1] yet as Christ he is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." He is the agent in creation: "In him were all things created that are in the heavens and upon the earth." He was pre-existent: "He is before all things, and in him all things consist."[2] The scheme of doctrine at which Paul arrived was summed up in his Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 4): "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;" and in that to Timothy (1 Tim. ii. 5): "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."[3]

As Christianity spread among pagans and Hellenistic Jews, it encountered, moreover, another metaphysical

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 21; Rom. v. 15; Acts xvii. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 47 (Revised Version).

[2] Col. i. 15–17.

[3] So highly Gnostic is much that is ascribed to Paul in some of these passages as to cause some of the Epistles which bear his name to be disputed, especially Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians.

conception, which had for centuries, and over a wide-spread area, a marvellous vogue. This idea was that of the "Logos," — an emanation going forth from Deity, as his agent and vicar in the world of men and things, to which a reality almost separate and personal was at length ascribed. The first verse of the Fourth Gospel describes this Logos, or "Word," of God; and how the conception became associated with the person of Jesus as the Christ that Gospel vividly illustrates. Misleading as it has been in respect to the real Jesus, the Fourth Gospel is thus of the highest value as illustrating this progress and development of a remarkable metaphysical conception.

I can only now briefly repeat what I have formerly shown here more at large, — that it was through the identification of the Christ-idea with the Logos-idea that the doctrine of Christ was recommended to the Greek world, and its character and form definitely fixed.

Henceforth, although it took centuries before the amazing result was fully reached, the steps were direct and sure to the ultimate identification of Christ with Deity in that audacious speculation of theology, the doctrine of the Trinity.

From the idea of a man especially endowed and commissioned by God for a particular divine purpose, to that of a man glorified and exalted to the highest conceivable plane of being; thence to that of an emanation from Deity far above manhood yet below Godhead; finally to identification with Deity in an unthinkable confusion of persons, — these are the steps which the Christ idea has travelled.

Once such a train of wild and weird speculations was started, loosened from all hold of reality, there was no logical point at which it could be stopped short of the extreme which it actually reached.[1]

[1] It took, however, almost four centuries to reach the final result. After many vicissitudes, through debates often violent and accompanied by physi-

There is a providence in all history, — social, mental, moral; and doubtless things could not have been other than they have been. The fine spiritual thought of Jesus, his exalted character, fell into the custody of men often of noble aims and purposes, but limited by the mental conditions of their time, possessed by its theories, prone to abstruse speculations in which the energies of minds, unchecked by natural science and sound mental philosophy, ran riot. The same men were weighted by tradition, and urged by that spirit of dogmatism which a mistaken view of the nature and office of religious truth sustains to-day.

It may be that, had not the person and thought of Jesus been seized upon by these tendencies of his age and that which followed it, and in their clouded amber been imperfectly preserved, they must have been lost to us altogether, or have survived only in a vague tradition or in still more imperfect remains than those which now we possess. It is difficult to draw his complete portrait from relics so scanty and fragmentary, and which have been so moulded by the ideas of others, as those which the Gospels present to us. This cannot be done dogmatically. It is a task which each disciple must finally perform for himself.

Happily, however, Jesus was too great a man to be readily hidden, even by the vast clouds of speculation which gathered so rapidly and thickly about his personality. On the relics which we have, the essential traits of his character, the elements of his thought, his fundamental

cal collisions of the disputants, through no little practice of the arts of the politician and the caucus, the doctrine of the deity of Christ was affirmed at the Council of Nice, in A. D. 325. The co-equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son was affirmed at the Council of Constantinople, in A. D. 381. The Trinity finally received its full doctrinal statement in the so-called Creed of Athanasius, the origin of which is obscure, but which was not known to the Greek Church before A. D. 1000, nor to the Latin Church before A. D. 800. (Its doctrinal elements, however, were familiar some centuries earlier.)

principles of conduct, are ineffaceably stamped. For the practical purposes of spiritual edification and moral incitement his image is not insufficiently clear; and it is of all the treasures of the moral world the choicest. As thought grows clearer with the advance of intellectual development, as science extends its trustworthy researches, as philosophy grows surer, as the moral standard rises, we are actually able to re-create him more surely, simply because the world is advancing a little nearer to the plane upon which he moved.

In those metaphysical and mystical speculations about Jesus which have resulted in the standard creeds of Christendom, and which have moulded the character of its discipleship; in the dogmas which have impaired his simple humanity, and have deformed, not elevated, his personality in the vain effort to magnify him; imposing and sometimes gracious and beautiful as the figments they present sometimes appear, I believe there is no reality, no truth, and so no spiritual life, no moral re-enforcement. I believe that, while they were probably (as I have suggested) inevitable in such a world as this, and in such periods as those in which they grew up; while (as the worthless "gangue" surrounds the precious ore, defending what it hides) they may have done some service in preserving the knowledge of Jesus through ages too gross to understand him as he was; in themselves they have been aside from and alien to the real and spiritual truth embodied in the nature, character, and life of Jesus, and offered in his religious and moral teachings. They have been unspiritual, melodramatic attempts to give factitious grandeur to verities, the real dignity of which lay all the while in their simplicity; travesties of the actual divine order in its relation to humanity; essentially childish, however grandiose the terms in which they have been presented and the stage on which the drama of theology has been conducted.

They have, therefore, turned men's thought, faith, and effort away from the truth. They have repressed the true spiritual ardor, exciting false and unreal enthusiasms in sincere, aspiring hearts. They have deadened the normal religious hunger which only the true spiritual meat can satisfy. They have hidden the real man Jesus from the world, and have diverted men from the only true discipleship, — that discipleship which should take up the same cross of spiritual endeavor, of moral self-purification, of brotherly loving service, which made the threefold structure of his holy life. Metaphysical belief about him lamentably took the place of the true and practical following of Jesus.

This long, long road, my friends, has all to be traced back! The Christian world is beginning to trace it back. The hold of miracle, of the so-called supernatural, of the metaphysical and mystical, is visibly loosening among all the sects. In the vast Roman Catholic communion this is chiefly and unhappily shown by the loss of all care for religion among great masses of the people of Europe, and these the most intelligent, who, when the alternative is presented which that authoritative organization alone offers them, dogma or nothing, answer, "Then nothing." To the educated class in modern Europe the Catholic theology is what the popular religion was to the same class in the later ancient Rome, — a fable.

In the great Protestant world similar phenomena are patent, both in Europe and America. Agnosticism, suspense of faith, indifferentism, mental unrest, abound. A very great portion of the population have utterly deserted the Church in Protestant Europe and in America. At the same time (and this is one great hope for religion and the religious life of the people) orthodox theologians are beginning to unclose their eyes to the light that is now abundantly pouring in upon their domain from natural science,

Biblical science, history, and philosophy. They are beginning to attack with earnestness and ability the problems which eighteen hundred years have indeed made complicated for them. Though as yet they go mincingly, clinging to as much as possible of their creeds, orthodox scholars are actually coming to the same views of the Scriptures at which the most unfettered students have arrived. Two eminent divines have but just now been on trial for such heresies, and, if not victorious in their struggles, have certainly with them the sympathy of a large and influential section of their denomination. You know well how many private minds are quietly rejecting the modes of faith in which they have been brought up. Our friends in the orthodox churches are apt to be offended and hurt if we suggest to them that they and their preachers hold some of the cardinal points in the doctrinal systems which stand unmodified in their Confessions and Articles of Belief, and for which, while they remain there, the practical supporters of those churches are certainly morally responsible.

These are but beginnings, I know; but they are the beginnings of a process which, like the other, cannot stop until the extreme result is reached, any more than the snows of winter can remain unmelted before the coming spring. The alternative has always been, "Reason or Rome;" the authority of a church, a book, a creed, or that of the private soul. The whole path, I repeat, is to be travelled back. The whole intricate skein is to be unravelled.

What will be the result?

It will be rational religion; the religion of nature and reason; the only religion which is sound, which is secure, which has in it the elements of truth, which is the spring of life; the religion of reflection, of experience, of observation, of life; the religion to which men come by natural

and genuine processes of heart and mind; the religion which harmonizes with whatever else we learn of our nature and our life by rational methods, by the normal use of our faculties, — this religion as contrasted with all schemes whatever which profess to rest upon the affirmations of men of bygone generations, upon any kind of asserted authoritative revelation from God to any soul but that of each several child of His stretching upward to Him for light and life.

It will be, therefore, spiritual religion as contrasted with that intellectual and formal religion which the world has had so long; for only a religion which is of the spirit can finally satisfy the spirit.

This process at which I hint can have in respect to Jesus but one result, namely, to restore him to the category of normal humanity, unqualified, unconfused; the highest category of being save only that which is the same, as he taught, in kind, only infinite in degree, — that is, Deity. All other conceptions of his nature are unreal, fanciful, unsuggestive, unfruitful. They will all drop away as the enlightened modern mind expands and asserts itself in theology as it has done in every other department of science. The essential triviality of all that has been added to the majesty of true manhood in Jesus will more and more clearly appear. Their false sanctity will fall from notions made sacred by association, gentle, sweet, dainty, but wanting in virility, and which, under the guise of the supernatural, have really only been unnatural, and so untrue and impossible.

Thus, in place of the mystical Christ, we shall be led back to the commanding but gracious presence of the man Jesus, who has indeed been hidden from the eyes of most Christian men since the day when his body was laid in the new sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea.

My friends, in the work of the restoration of the true

image of Jesus, so long encrusted with speculation and superstition, it has been the peculiar privilege of the religious body which you and I represent humbly to share. Its mission has, indeed, only by degrees revealed itself to the Unitarian communion. Our earlier predecessors retained, of course, much of the mystical belief about Jesus which has been current in the Christian Church. Two strands only of the cord which had bound Christian thought the early Unitarians ventured to unloose. They untied the bond of authority, and vindicated the right of every man to his own honest judgment and opinion. This they did tentatively and hesitatingly for a time, yet with increasing boldness and fidelity, and at length fully.

Their other service was in detaching from the coils of dogma in which the person of Jesus was involved the conception of his Deity.

Unitarian Christianity a hundred years ago, even fifty years ago, was still Scriptural and still supernaturalistic. Its Christ was a sublimated phantasm, exquisite, perhaps, but having the reality and substantiality neither of Deity nor humanity. It had its structure of miracle and its hesitating theories of inspiration and salvation. It was a half-way house, and had the comfort and security of neither terminus.

But the last half-century has brought us into the open light of day. Let God be praised that a process often so injurious has been so largely accomplished without the loss of faith in the realities of the spiritual world, of reverence for truth, of tenderness for all true sanctities! But it is plain that, as a body, we now stand for perfect freedom of thought, for the naturalness of religion, and, in the particular of which I have been speaking, for the strict and normal humanity of Jesus.

On us, then, at this moment, especially rests the duty of presenting this imposing figure, freed from childish

trappings of mystery, in the dignity of that spiritual childship to God which is the generic inheritance of all men, to the waiting world.

The responsibility is weighty, but it is gracious; and the task is now most hopeful. Let us accept it without hesitation. Let us be courageous and explicit; for our commission is merely that of resuming the actual work of Jesus, which was to convince men in theory, and to lead them to feel it and make it true in fact, that humanity and Deity are in substance one, — that we are the children of God, and He is our Father.

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SERVICE OF PRAYER

IN THE

WORK OF THE WORLD.

BY

REV. AUGUSTUS M. LORD.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

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THE SERVICE OF PRAYER IN THE WORK OF THE WORLD.

That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. — Acts xvii. 27.

James Darmesteter, in his noble essay on the Prophets of Israel, with great force of argument and brilliancy of illustration, urges the claim that an age or a nation is strong and influential and rich in resources in proportion as it possesses, for its leaders and governors, men who have the prophetic gift, the power to gather together into a single unit the various tendencies, impulses, aims, opportunities of their time and their particular calling, and see whither the pressure of all of them taken together is moving the community, and then to throw all the weight of their influence either to warn and to check, or to enforce and to hasten that movement.

What we need to-day, he believes, is more men, more leaders of just that type, — men of the wide prophetic consciousness, and the keen, incorruptible, prophetic conscience.

Side by side with this claim I am sure we must urge another which affects directly the life of the humblest follower as well as of the greatest leader: the claim that the world still needs — needs more than ever, as its power is greater and its opportunity larger — another gift, another quality, another steadily developed and purified and en-

nobled trait of the Hebrew people, — the spirit of prayer, which moved unerringly upward, freeing itself from bondage to one superstition after another, getting ever closer and closer to the practical life of the people, step by step in line with the spirit of prophecy. Indeed, progress in the one is impossible without progress in the other. The prophet gets his resistless impulse out of the silent depths of aspiration and faith in the multitude of lives to which he prophesies; to use a favorite simile of Gladstone's, "Like some great cliff facing oceanward, he only gives them back in spray what they give him in wave."

It is this claim which I wish to make good, and the practical applications of this claim which I wish to make clear, immediate, pressing, in what I have to say this morning.

You will understand I am not speaking of prayer at its lowest, — the use of a particular form of words as a charm to conjure with, the cry of grovelling fear, the perfunctory homage of the unprofitable servant; all these, to be sure, are in the past, and they are in the present, too. More shame to us!

I am speaking of prayer, however, at its best and highest, the conscious concentration of a man's thought, feeling, and will, as they awake to the presence of the friendship of God; the concentration upon each human life of the thought and feeling and will of the conscious life at the heart of the world, without whose deliberate intention and guidance all progress, all civilization, would be impossible.

Be patient with me! I know to whom I am speaking. I am speaking to a generation of men and women most of whom, the wide world over, think they do not pray, and cannot pray, in any real and satisfying sense. Some of you have given over the thought of prayer willingly. You think you are impregnable in your position that the

need of prayer was a weakness of childhood and youth, which has no place in your strong, self-reliant manhood and womanhood. You think you can prove that prayer will be unreasonable and unnecessary when all men shall become as strong and fully developed as you are, — a consummation, it seems, that will surely come in the fulness of time. But think! May it not be that prayer has no place in your life because your life does not cover enough ground to include the domain of prayer; has not claimed or entered into the inheritance of all the rich and wonderful experiences which are meant for the possession and use of a human life; has not pushed out into the deep, and known the whole peril and mastery, the beckonings and invitations, the still broadening and inspiring mysteries, that lie out there beyond the land-locked bay of your content? May it not be? It is that possibility which I shall try to force through, to make a probability, still further even a conviction, God helping me, against the parry and guard of your practised thought. And although I should fail, you will respect my motive, as I respect yours.

Again, there are those of you who have given over the thought of prayer not willingly, but wistfully.

> "It was a childish ignorance, but now 't is little joy
> To think I 'm farther off from heaven than when I was a boy."

Nothing can take the place for you of that old affectionate confidence, that closer walk with a God in whom now you strive vainly to believe. Nothing can dim that memory or make it less dear to you, — not the demonstrations of material science about the grandeur of the universe in general; not the abstract reasonings of ethics and sociology about the dignity and duty of man in particular. The old illusion will still be dearer to your heart, even while what you deem the new reality is clearer to

your thought. To such as these among you I shall try to show, what I believe with all my soul, that while the old childish view must perhaps be abandoned, yet it is not to be abandoned merely that its place may be filled by anything that a material science or an abstract philosophy, unaided, can supply. These bring us insights into new realities, undoubtedly, but not into the whole of reality that is waiting for our discovery and recognition. The old conception of prayer is to be abandoned only that it may give place to a sense of communion with God more intimate still, more close and loving, more noble and inspiring, than could be possible for the child. The letter of the child's faith shall be destroyed, only that its spirit may be fulfilled. It shall be a progress and enrichment, not a narrowing and a loss. Just as it is in the communion between one human life and another.

The child loves the father and the mother, and comes to them with its trials and its troubles, its ambitions and disappointments. The love is real, and has in it the root of holiness and nobility, not the flower and the fruit. For in the love of the best child there must be mingled something of wilfulness and selfishness and short-sightedness, — a looking toward the gifts and comforts that love affords, rather than toward love itself. But by and by the parent and the child walk together as friends, and the child knows that the communion of love between life and life is the main thing, the great, the all-important reality, the inalienable possession of the human soul; and the outward gift is only the passing, and not even the whole expression of that reality. More than that, he comes to recognize that the silences and refusals of love sometimes speak a nobler message, give a deeper and at the last a more satisfactory answer, dower us with a more precious gift, than do its yieldings and concessions and demonstrative declarations.

If there be here to-day any lonely, wistful, backward-looking souls, who have lost out of manhood or womanhood the sense of a presence which gave beauty to childhood and enthusiasm to youth, God help me to show them that it is only because they have not yet searched through the heart of their manhood and womanhood; they have not yet comprehended their inner life. For that presence of the living God does not draw farther away from us; it journeys inward year by year.

Let us begin, then, with the rudiments, the first principles, below all possibility of dispute between reasonable and thoughtful men. There are two elements in every man's thought, — the sense of his own life, of himself as a distinct being, and his sense of the eternal source and principle of life of which he is the particular result. You may think of this last element either as unknown and unknowable, or you may think of it as a conscious personal spirit whom we love because he first loved us, or you may think of it in any of the various possible terms and images that lie between these two extremes; but you must think of it in some form or other if you force your thought home; if you are to claim fellowship with those whose thought is conclusive and authoritative in the modern world, whether scientists or philosophers, men of letters or men of action. And one quality in this environing presence which none of us, from whatever point of view we approach it, can help acknowledging, is the quality of life. God is the great eternal heart of life, in relation to which alone our own personal life can take on color, significance, duty, power, — does take on all the more meaning, symmetry, force, distinctness, as our relation to that life of life becomes more clearly conscious, more orderly, more direct and constant and close.

Now just here we come face to face with the essential fact of prayer. The spirit of prayer is wakened by just

this touch between life and life, the sense of rest and repose, of unburdening and relief, of uplift and power and joy, which comes whenever, by accident or by intention, the lesser, more confined and limited life enters into open communion with the larger, exhaustless life. This is a joy and a power clearly distinct from that which comes from the contact of your life with some machine, some system of supposed material law, which does your work but does not respond to you in kind, does not give you the sense of satisfying companionship.

My conviction is that the need and satisfaction of prayer touches life through and through, from the bottom to the top and from the centre to the circumference. There is a life of the senses; well, then, there is a prayer of the senses, too. He who has ever gone out to seek his little definite work, or his little definite pleasure, on some perfect day when the sky is clear and the air had in it the tonic quality caught up from the seas or the wooded hills, and has found his whole body thrilled and exhilarated with an unexpected sense of health, buoyancy, strength, flowing in upon it from the great sources of physical life of which his bodily vigor is only a single expression; he who, in his absorption in that great glow of life that kindled upon him, has for the moment forgotten, lost sight of the definite work or the definite pleasure, and just lived for the sake of living; he who, when at last he turned again and fulfilled his purpose and his duty, has found that he carried into his actions, his words, his work, an ease of accomplishment, a resistless energy which could never come from all his lonely planning and willing, — he knows what I mean. In the old pagan days, even in the earlier days of Christianity, when a man out of some such noble physical confidence said, "I never felt so well, so sure, so strong, so glad as I do now," men hushed him up, saying he was awakening the jealousy of God, he

was tempting Providence. But to-day we deliberately put ourselves in the way of these communions with the saving health at the heart of Nature.

Shall there then be these refreshments of the physical instrument of the spirit's life out of the great system, the great life of the physical world, and shall there be no mightier, fuller, deeper consciousness behind and around our conscious life, our will, our thought, our purposes, our affections? And if there is such a spiritual background, such an all-enfolding presence, shall there be no conscious relationship between my spirit and that spirit? If there be, then this communion of the spirit of man with the spirit of God, the abiding consciousness that guides the successive generations of men, holding the fruits of one generation for the inheritance of the next, — this communion of life with life shall be prayer.

Look the reasonableness of the situation, look the facts in the face, and there can be no "if" about what is waiting for us here. The only question is whether we will rouse ourselves to search into it and understand it; whether prayer shall be for us as an occasional gleam, a flash of passing insight, or as a steadily shining light held in a firm hand. Doubtless we must all begin with the one, and we shall not reach the other in a single moment, in a single step, by a single act of the will; nor should we be disheartened because it is so.

Let me tell you what I think is the way by which we may come to the fuller communion with God which we all need. First, I should say that we should learn not to avoid that communion, not to shrink from these moments alone in the presence of the Most High that inhabiteth Eternity, not to hurry away from them, trying to busy ourselves with little interests whenever we find that such solemn, thrilling, sobering moments are close upon us. I know many of us do that. We do not like to think seri-

ously, to feel deeply; we do not like the sense of being beyond our depth; and therefore we try to escape when the tides of the spirit sweep in on us. Whereas what we ought to do is to recognize that the depths are there, and to develop the strength and skill that should make it a joy to feel them under us.

Again, as we should not shrink from receiving impressions from the spiritual world about us, so also we should not shrink from pouring out, through the silent expressions, petitions, thanksgivings of our hearts, put into coherent thoughts and if need be uttered words, — for thought without words is to most of us vague and dim, — we should not shrink from thus pouring out as before a loving, living, listening God, the tumult and stress of our own life when its inner deeps are broken up. The life of God is waiting for us, and we need not fear this abandonment of soul, this letting of ourselves go. You may think it is only into the dark, but try it; let your hopes or your doubts have way; do not try to live them down or to reason them down piece by piece! It is only so that sanity and strength and peace of soul come back. And that they do come back in greater measure is the proof that in their venture they touch an answering life and not a senseless void.

And then I believe we may learn to come to the larger life of God not only when we feel the drawing, the attraction of it in the way of impression from without or impulse from within, — we shall learn further the wisdom of coming to it regularly with the little daily life of our souls; we shall learn to set aside certain moments, certain days, when we shall gather the results of our effort together and sum them up as in the presence of one in whose justice and love there is no variableness or turning shadow. A man cannot go out from those moments of silent communion with God, if he is truly sincere with

himself, just the same as he entered into them. When he looks at his life there in the quiet, away from the excitement of competition and contest, away from all foolish noise, often he shall find that he has cheated himself; he has done little where he might have done much. He finds his fingers closing about a handful of dust, when he might have held a victor's sword or the sceptre of a noble leadership. Is this all he has done with the opportunities of his life! To-morrow he will begin to live out of a higher impulse and a clearer wisdom! So God's voice reaches him in the silence which he has made ready for God.

And finally, at the very last we shall learn that prayer which is the crown of all; it shall be more than a coming to God, more than a testing of our soul in his presence: it shall be a walking with him, a yielding of our soul to his service, a carrying of his spirit with us into our daily life, knowing it as the conscious background of our words and deeds. And how much mightier and more commanding than the word or the deed which has behind it only our personal conceit, our selfish interests, our careless good nature, is the word which we speak as a message, the deed which we do at the resistless bidding of a love and loyalty for the sake of which, if need be, we lay down our life. It is not that we live and die that is significant; it is for what we long to live, or for what we are willing to die!

I know I am speaking of the heights of great attainments which few, if any, of us have ever reached. But unless we lift our eyes to those heights, we shall never win and hold a single step toward them; and the lifting of the eyes, the pledging of the will, that is the way of prayer.

Oh, let us set our feet in that path, for it opens close upon every life; and let us begin just where it opens, just where it is part of our genuine experience, although at

first we must begin doubtfully, and seemingly far away from the full harmony —

> "When mind and soul according well
> Shall make one music as before."

Paul is not afraid to speak of prayer in words that would not be in tune with the dogmatic sentences of the creeds, "If perhaps they might feel after God."

It is the glory of religion at its best, it is the glory of a free church, that it will not permit, it does not tempt us to think that we have fulfilled the whole function of prayer when we have repeated a few sentences, read a few words. It is the glory of a free church that it permits us to begin our learning to pray no higher than the point of our farthest knowledge, our purest affection, our best attainment. More than that, it constrains and commands us to begin at that highest point in our own soul, our own life, — no lower and no higher; there, and nowhere else. Must we begin with an altar to an unknown God? Well and good! That may be the beginning; it shall not be the end. "Now we see in a glass darkly, then face to face. Now I know in part, then shall I know even as also I am known!" And it shall be prayer, in its deep, true sense, — prayer, and the thoughts and desires and resolves which follow after prayer, that shall lift our life day by day, year by year, from strength to strength, and from glory to glory.

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[No. 107]

THE

CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD.

BY

REV. CHARLES F. DOLE.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

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THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD.

Though he be not far from every one of us. — Acts xvii. 27.

I venture to bring you distinctly a subject of theology. Theology must not, however, be supposed to be a dry and tedious subject. Though the word is Greek, it simply means our thought about God. There is nothing more interesting than this. There is nothing that an intelligent child might like better to know than what God is and what God does, and especially, if one can learn to see God. Some think that they are conscious of God now. They are as sure of the presence of God watching over them when they wake in the morning, or when they lie down to sleep, as little children are conscious of their mothers' presence. They are as conscious of the presence of God here in this church as we are all conscious of each other. We want to help show that these persons are right, and say what is true about God.

If I were to tell you that there slumbered in every man, besides seeing and hearing and the other senses, a new sixth sense more wonderful than any of the former senses, — for example, a sort of clairvoyant sense to see things at a distance; if here and there one and another had actually developed and enjoyed this new sense, and reported that it added a whole new world to their life, as hearing when it first came might be supposed to have

added; if any one could tell how to develop this new faculty so that others could enjoy it, — you would at least be curious to hear all that there was to be said about it.

The consciousness of God comes to us vouched for in the same way as such a new sense ought to come. Trustworthy persons say, "Yes: we have had a whole new world added to our lives." Moreover, instances happen daily in which the new sense seems to be awakened in persons who had never fairly realized it before. These facts are very curious, and need explanation.

Every one knows how we begin to know the physical world. There is a time in infancy when we do not know it at all. We can conceive of a child like that strange Caspar Häuser, who might grow up and hardly know that there was a world. Suppose the child were deprived of every sense of taste, touch, hearing, and sight. He would still exist, but he would not know anything beyond himself. The way by which the child learns the world is by pushing out his senses against it. He feels after things, and things answer back. He opens his eyes, and things make impressions. He listens, and sounds come in upon him. There is a process of action and reaction between him and the world outside of him. The more the child uses his senses, the more he trusts them and trusts the answers that come back, the more he learns of the world outside.

But stop! How do we know that there is anything outside of the man, much less a world? We certainly know the feeling in our senses; but how do we know that the thing corresponds to our feeling? The thing looks red, or feels sharp, or sounds shrill. How do we know what redness or sharpness or shrillness is in the thing, or that there is anything at all more than a feeling in us produced no one knows how? Well, we do not know it, if any one will

be exactly particular. That is, our senses only tell us our feeling about it, — that, when we look, sights impress our eyes; when we listen, we get sounds; when we push out, we feel resistance.

There is one thing, however, perfectly sure. It is that there is something *not* ourselves that plays upon us and makes all these wonderful feelings. We cannot make them. They are by a force or a will other than ours. We may not find out what the redness is in the thing that makes redness in our sight; but there is some fact there that fits or corresponds to our sight, and makes redness in our sight and in the sight of any other sane man. The letters in the types may be the reverse of the printed page. I do not care what the letters in the type look like, or whether I know how to read them as they stand in type form. What I care about is that the type finally brings facts, thoughts, ideas, truths, to my eyes. So with the world around me. I do not care whether I know the reality *matter:* what I care for is the fact that what I call "matter" brings to my mind from the great realm outside thoughts, ideas, truths. There is every reason to believe, and no good reason to disbelieve, that the outside world does this; and this is all that it is good for.

Please observe now how vague all our knowledge of the reality of the outside world is. And yet how real and necessary it is! Vague as it is, it is quite sufficient to live by: all that we do proceeds from it. We feel out still, we open and use our eyes, we listen, we trust ourselves to this wondrous answering power ever playing upon us. Touch, taste, handle, question, and it answers back.

I cannot call it dead matter that does this. It behaves more like life. It is brimful of intelligence. It wants to give us its secrets, it wants to pique our curiosity, it wants us to ask deeper questions of it. It bids us trust it more fully. Yes, even this physical world is always striking

chords within our souls that nothing, except an intellectual interpretation, is adequate for. So much for our parable from the physical world. We shall have to use it again in every particular.

Let us assume now — what men so easily say that they believe — the fact of God. A cause, a life, an intelligence, must be behind all this wonderful interplay of force, beauty, mystery. Let us assume that this causing life is not an unfeeling Power, like the wind; is not less than its creatures, but more; is not, therefore, without consciousness, will, love, but possesses them all. Assume this. What should we conjecture would happen in case God chose that men should know and enjoy him? What if — as in the old catechism answer — this were the chief end of man's life, — "to know God and enjoy him forever"? Suppose it a moment.

We have seen how, in daily life, man knows the great outward world of reality. He knows it by reacting against it through each of his senses. The reality answers back. The little telegraph machine of the personal life makes connection with the various currents, trusts them, gives and takes from them, delivers its message, and ticks in response. So, precisely, in the sphere of this higher and more spiritual kind of life.

The truth is that there are slumbering in us aspirations, longings, cravings, after God. There are certainly cravings in us for a rest, a tranquillity, an inward peace such as no mere animal wants. All our noblest music only voices this deep need of the soul for harmony. We long for growth and greater growth, to be real and genuine; we long most of all for love, to bestow it and also to warm ourselves in its light; we long for life, — not the show, but the substance, not existence, but the vital reality. In all these things there is an infinite quality in the longing, the aspiration, the need of our souls. A part would not

satisfy us, — to grow to any fixed point and to stop; to live so many years and to die; to win glorious bubbles of fame only to see them burst and leave no genuine substance; to love or be loved up to some limit of comfortable convenience. When we are at our best, when the higher part of our nature is working, we cannot tolerate anything that does not run up into the infinite values.

Let us stoutly assume that these longings and aspirations within us mean something. For they are most characteristic of man. He would not be man without them. Let us guess — a perfectly natural guess — that these facts of our spiritual nature are like the senses in our physical nature. They are *the points of contact* in us over which the spiritual forces are meant to play. But it is idle merely to have however mighty a battery, unless you use it, or however beautiful a telegraph instrument, unless you bring it into connection with the magnetic currents. All the spiritual aspirations, cravings, and needs of our souls are nothing unless we trust them, and let them act and react and see what comes back from their movement. How, then, shall men employ the delicate, wonderful spiritual machinery within them? The experimenting of thousands of years lies behind us, to give us its costly and pathetic lessons.

It ought to be premised that men begin in their higher life of spiritual consciousness, as in the life of the senses, with the lowest kind of consciousness at first. It is a matter of development and use. Some are vastly more precocious than others, and some are color-blind, or worse. There are many grown men and women, we suspect, who only at their best and rarest moments are as yet conscious of possessing these tentacles of the spirit of which we have spoken. The sense of the infinite, the longing for love and rest and peace and life beyond measure, still sleeps.

It was natural, therefore, that men should first try to come to God through outward and material channels of access. All the ancient rites of sacrifice, the burning altars, the shrines and carved images, the gorgeous rituals, were so many attempts to have access to God through the bodily senses. So with the common thought of ghosts or materialized spirits. The trouble with these attempts was that the men who tried to reach God by their senses remained in the world of sense, and did not fairly conceive of God as a loving spirit or quickening life.

There was another attempt to reach God as pure spirit. Men thought that, if they could get as nearly free of their bodies as possible, if they could fast and starve, their spirit might see through the thin veil and find God. The craving, the aspiration, the need, was real, deep, and worthy. But their method was wrong. It was against nature, not through it. It led into the perilous region of mental disease, insanity, delusion, hallucinations. It was morally selfish, as each man tried to find God for himself and be saved alone.

We are driven back from these pathetic but one-sided attempts of men to find God by their senses, or, on the other hand, by ignoring their senses. Our parable will help us to a truer way. For how did we see that we learned the reality of the outward world? Not by looking into the sky and contemplating space, not by stretching our hands out into thin air, but by pushing against the hardest, nearest substances, — the walls, the floor, the ground; by looking first at the things which lie closest, into our mother's face, at the grass and the trees in our garden. We began exactly where a reaction and answer came back, as we pushed and sought. New feelings in us corresponded to every new point of contact outside. So in the higher realm of the spirit. The things and facts of the spirit do not make themselves known as pure spirit. The higher

things come through the forms of the things seen and felt, as, when we read, thoughts and ideas come through the types to the print which our eyes see. We have not to begin, then, by pushing out after a God far off in the heavens, or looking into thin air to find God, a spirit. We push out, and try with our tentacles for the things *closest* to us. *To find the fact of God?* you ask. Yes, we answer, precisely, to find God. This is the modern scientific method of theology. You may call it Jesus' method.

For the higher realm is not away in space or in some other existence. It is not far from every one of us. Close to us daily are spirits, also feeling after the facts of the spiritual world. They are spirits in bodies certainly, not disembodied; but it is not on the side of their bodies that we love them or sympathize with them, or understand their language. The physical facts, the form, look, voice, are the alphabet by which we come at their spirits. We stand in relation to the *self* that lives and loves, — a deeper relation than by the touch of the hand. We are impressed, as if by some spiritual force, with duties that we owe them. We push out, and do what we are urged. Action and reaction go on between us and these other lives. We serve them, we give ourselves forth toward them, we love them, and let our love go. We are no longer pushing into the void, thin air. There is that which answers back and corresponds to every touch of ours, in this throbbing human life beyond us.

Oh, yes, you say, we know something about this; but where is God? Let us be sure about the reality first, and then we will take care of the name to call it by afterwards. First the alphabet, and reading later. So let us be sure that we know these near spiritual facts before we interpret them. Let us fairly accept the wonderful fact that, besides our bodily relation to men and women, there is this

whole realm of higher and closer relations that we bear to them. We rise into this higher realm and feel its distinct verities by reaching out after them and reacting against them through obedience, service, love, — yes, through every act and word, — so be it is utter obedience, unqualified service, unbounded love. For we cannot get into the higher realm by any half measures, as the baby cannot find out what the block is like, except by giving his undivided attention to the block. So we must push out with all our might if we want the blessed reaction. When thus, on the one hand, we act and push out to the uttermost toward these lives of men, women, children, and all living creatures near us, to reach them, help them, serve them, make them happy, we have rest, satisfaction, gladness, harmony, as though some unseen force took us up into itself. Life is at its full, and grows fuller. Whereas, on the other hand, the opposite happens, as though one stopped breathing. There is suffocation and stifling. The life grows dull, heavy, joyless. These things are facts; who ever knew them to fail?

These are the essential facts that we want. There is a spiritual realm to which we belong, quite above and transcending the physical, as the thoughts of the man transcend the alphabet blocks of the child. There is a joyous, conscious life in this higher realm, peaceful, tranquil, yet energetic. But it is a life which registers itself, as everything in this universe seems to be bound to register itself, through some kind of marks, acts, symbols. Thus you give a cup of cold water to a little child, a material thing, yet for love's sake. On one side of your life you enter thereby into a spiritual relation: your spirit through love touches spirit. On the other side is the visible, natural, bodily action. But you could not have had the one without the other, any more than you could carry on thought without words. So much for the beau-

tiful series of facts. Now, at last, for the name and the interpretation.

I said that, at our best, in our highest, purest acts of duty, devotion, and love, we seem to be simply taken up by a universe force that plays on us, as the wind in the Æolian harp. This seems to be almost a literal statement of the truth. It is not the little child, to whom you give the cup of cold water, that gives you the sense of satisfaction. You do an unthanked duty, for the State, perhaps. No man gives you the sense of unbounded rest, neither do you manufacture it; for you could not get it without performing the outward condition. In fact, there is something infinite about it, as your gift was infinite. You do not even make yourself a single bodily motion or invent a thought. All comes to you like a gift from the Power and the Intelligence outside of you. Much less do you make or invent this highest of all things, — the joy and the restfulness of love or the peace of conscience. On neither one side nor the other do you manufacture life. What, then, must life and love and peace and joy be? I call them always the signs and tokens of God.

But how do we know what God is like? some one asks. Well, how did we know what the outward world is like? We did not precisely know. We agreed that what matter really is, was very vague. But we knew all that we needed to know; namely, that outside of us is wonderful Reality, which acts back when we feel toward it, which offers us letters to carry marvellous messages of thought, which we can depend upon, we believe, the more carefully we question it.

So I may not tell you precisely what the Power is like that acts and reacts upon us in the realm of the spirit. I know what it does, as I know my friend. I know the beneficent tokens, the peace, the gladness, the love. A machine does not do these things. An impersonal force

like gravitation does not do them. Call it "God." The name does not matter.

Here, then, is the finite creature, with the infinite nature wrapped up in him, longing for the touch of God, quite helpless and hopeless, alone. We put him in touch, and open communication backward and forward with the nearest spirit, with a child or friend. The electric currents of the universe take them both up. Touching each other, loving each other, played on by the highest, obeying the highest, lo! they are each in touch with God. But what if they do not know it? What if they do not see God, but only each other? The blessed fact remains. By and by they must know. For the finite does not satisfy: man passes away, the friend dies, the wife or husband may disappoint and not give the needed answer back. No matter: you have got into the region where God is at every touch. The joy need not pass, the rest and peace still remain, the love and the life there are eternal.

Well for him who knows what the facts mean, the vision and the interpretation thereof. Well for him who finds out early how to come to God, not by altars and rites, not alone by himself, spirit to pure spirit, in the solitary closet, not by the machinery of a mediator, — some other man who stands between God and the soul, — but by the actual contact of the spirit with spirit through common daily toil, through every friendly word, through all the acts which love commands. Lo! God is here, and you were not aware. There is nothing secular in such love. All life becomes communion and prayer. Here, to-day, in church, bowing together, vowing your best, willing the uttermost right, putting conceit, hate, and pride far away, joining hands in brotherly love, saying in so many words, "What wilt thou have me to do?" you stand in the holy Presence. It is God's peace and love which you breathe: you are conscious and alive. But not less really to-mor-

row, when you go forth to do what you have promised, when you obey in act, when you pay the sacrifices of love in many a home, when you put self-will aside and let love have sway, it is God, whether or not you think the name or recognize the helping power and the inspiring forces. It is all God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Do the highest he bids, act out to the nearest lives that you touch what he prompts, and your slightest action shall meet the reaction of the Eternal.

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[No. 108]

FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

BY

REV. HOWARD N. BROWN.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. — MATT. xxviii. 19.

IT is scarcely possible to consider these words as a summing up of Christian faith without some reference to the dogmatic use that has been made of them. At the present time, however, that branch of the subject may be dealt with very briefly, and with no design to revive useless controversies; in order that we may go on to see, if possible, something more in this triune symbol than dogma alone has thus far made of it.

All Christendom is perfectly agreed on one doctrine, that of the unity of the Godhead. There are not many gods, or several gods; there is but one true God, maker of heaven and earth. All the creeds of the Church state this with an emphasis that marks their sense of its importance. But it has come to be the generally accepted belief of the Church that, in this One, there are three persons, or three "eternal distinctions," as it is sometimes expressed, and that recognition of these three persons, corresponding to the terms of the ancient baptismal formula, is essential to any true thought of God.

Of late years many people have come to question whether this belief made any part of the first preaching of Christianity; to doubt whether it has, in reason or revelation, a basis adequate to support the claims that are made for it; to deny that, be it true or untrue, it is of

sufficient importance to be made the test of Christian fellowship. This last is the only point which there is now much need to debate.

The heat of an old battle having much subsided, no one any longer considers it necessary to work for the entire destruction of a belief that has so woven itself into the history of the Church. The question still remains to be answered, however, whether or not they who, for one reason or another, cannot hold that belief are to be generally regarded as belonging to the Christian fold. Let it be, if you please, their misfortune, or their defect, that they are unable to believe with their fellows on this point; is their failure of so much consequence that they should be denied the Christian name?

Even very broad and liberal men either do not answer this question at all, or seem to say that without acceptance of the trinitarian belief no one can have the root of the matter in him. Let the real point at issue be clearly and unmistakably stated. Their own right to hold the dogma goes entirely unchallenged. But we deny that others who fail to see the force of arguments by which their minds are convinced are therefore less true followers of Christ; and we make this denial, not in the name of any foolish independence of thought, but in the interest of Christianity itself, which suffers from such rigidity of speculative belief.

The Church still has the power to punish terribly those whom it regards as heretics, — to visit upon them a contempt and suspicion, and to compel them to a separation from the vast currents of its sympathy, from which they sometimes suffer as keenly and disastrously in spirit, as ever the victims of the Inquisition suffered in body under the thumbscrew and the rack. The Church has, moreover, the same tendency that it has manifested all along to delude itself by thinking that the weakness and the pain,

which are the fruit of its own injustice, are the very proofs of iniquity in the heresy it chooses to condemn. As the Jews said to Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," so the Church seems to say to those whom its own intolerance has crippled, "If you have the divine truth in your possession, triumph over this persecution;" and when the persecution leads many to lose heart, it interprets the defection as a vindication of its course.

That all this is cruel is the least to be said of it. In the end it is as fatal a policy as that which led France to crush the Huguenots, or Spain to exclude the Moors. The Church in this fashion is alienating and excluding some of the best elements of modern life. That its doors are still closed against a small band openly bearing a heretical name, is not in itself a great matter. But let one look about him and see what classes are now totally estranged from the Church! This scornful intolerance which says to the world, "Think as I think, or claim no part of a common Christian inheritance," is not only false to the spirit of Christ, but is working a serious damage to Christ's cause, which must be one day bitterly repented.

The time has gone by in this free land of ours for an enlightened man to feel justified in attempting much criticism of his neighbor's creed so long as that other shows a due regard for the rights of his fellow-Christians; but when the claim is made on behalf of a dogma that there can be no Christianity without it, they to whom it seems less than essential truth are bound to state somewhat carefully the grounds of their objection.

We say, then, that the expression "three persons in one" has to-day become most unfortunate. Whatever the word may have signified in other times, a "person" means to us a distinct and separate individual being; and it is only by constant, ceaseless explanation that the Church

can prevent such language as the Nicene Creed employs from degenerating into tri-theism. We can see no gain to be won commensurate with the power that must be expended in maintaining this apologetic attitude.

It is somewhat a question of strategy. A good general will not needlessly waste any of the forces under his command in defending a post that is no vital part of his line of fortifications. If, as we affirm, this dogma is not essential to the Christian life and the Christian hope, then it were far more wise to place it among questions concerning which the followers of Christ have perfect liberty to disagree.

We say, again, that if any have been so fully informed of the nature of infinite mind as to be able to declare that there are so many and no more "eternal distinctions" involved in the being of God, we are ignorant of the sources of their wisdom. What they tell us may or may not be true; we know not how the question can be determined. The whole speculation seems to us to lie so far beyond the range of finite intelligence, that we would rather not try to be sure on so profound a theme.

Moreover, when we are asked if God is to be our Father only, and if we are to find nothing in Deity answering or corresponding to the filial and social relationships of life, we ask in reply what any of these relationships can be, other than an expression and outgrowth of God's eternal love. We do not see that any of our structures are left hanging in the air without divine basis and support while we conceive that both the home and society at large are held together by the indwelling divine love which is the life and strength of every bond by which heart is joined to heart. We think there might as well be three kinds of gravitation — one for the man, one for the child, and one for the multitude — as three distinctions in that eternal power which is essentially the same, whether it be the love

of parent for child, of a son for his father, or of friend for friend.

If, to any, these distinctions do seem to open up the mysterious deeps of being, how can we object? Our only plea is that, as Saint Paul has spoken of God "dwelling in a light which no man can approach unto," they who simply realize how little they know of the wonders which that light hides, are not to be ranked with the heathen on that account. We make this plea, not on personal grounds, but out of our solemn conviction that the Church is only heaping up obstacles in its own pathway by erecting barricades at a point where no vital question is at issue.

And now, to leave this somewhat unpleasant and ungracious task of criticism, for the more inspiring endeavor after positive statements, what, from our point of view, do we find in the command to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? These words were first spoken long before the theology of the Church had crystallized into dogmatic form. They provide a kind of summing up in a single phrase of the great truths which Christ had taught, — the fatherhood of God, the divine sonship of man, and the close presence of a divine life, or spirit, pervading and enfolding every human soul. Used in this way, these words will forever be glorious in Christian memory and dear to Christian thought. Indeed, we have abundant reason to believe that long after the schoolmen of the Middle Ages and all their works have faded out of sight, these words will live upon the lips of men, the treasured symbol of mighty truths whose height and depth we have scarcely begun to measure.

The Fatherhood of God! Have we, as yet, more than explored the narrow coast of that great truth, as it was taught and lived by Christ? It stretches before us still, a whole new world, containing boundless possibilities of

spiritual wealth; and we dwell only on its outmost borders, mere pioneers of the city of God that is to be.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," was all that the devout Psalmist could find courage to say. Human life then, for the most part, cowered and trembled before that King of heaven, whose ways were past its finding out. The Jews were indeed sons, but sons of whom? Of Abraham, and of Isaac, and they dared to link themselves with no holier source. They had not yet come to consciousness of something within them which established a bond between their souls and the supreme majesty of the skies, and none had told them to claim as their father him who held their lives in the hollow of his hand.

But when their last great teacher came to them, his word was no timid comparison between God's mercy and an earthly father's pity; he taught his disciples to say boldly, "Our Father who art in heaven." We use the words so often, that perhaps it is a little difficult to realize how they have changed the whole spiritual attitude of mankind, and what far-reaching thoughts are contained in them. God the Father of men! giving to them his nature; surrounding them with his spirit; leading them by his almighty hand; not only ruling and judging them, but loving them with an infinite desire to lift them up and direct their paths toward good! Do we imagine that such a conception could be widely taught to men, and received into their hearts, without producing profound changes in their life? If we have the least idea what deliverance it wrought from terrors that had long hung upon the footsteps of the race, like iron fetters upon a prisoner, the wonder is not that Saint Paul found much occasion to rebuke the liberty that degenerated into license; it is that Christianity itself was not lost in a very delirium and intoxication of joy over the escape that had been effected.

Yet so great is the task, to plant a new truth in the mind of man, and to bring it to bear its fruit in the life; and so slow is the work of following out such a sublime thought in its meanings and bearings upon the conduct of practical affairs,—that those early Christians no more saw the whole truth involved in Christ's teaching of the Fatherhood of God, than our slaves, a few years since, realized the whole meaning of civil liberty, when their bonds were suddenly stricken from their limbs.

As they felt in some dim way that their life had been raised to a nobler plane, but there were long years of toil to be endured before they could really know much of the grandeur of free manhood, so the first Christians celebrated a triumph that signified almost infinitely more than they could comprehend; and we, even now, have but the most shadowy idea what life on earth may be like when men live here, fully and consistently, as under a Heavenly Father's care.

We are sometimes asked if we do not consider this a poor and cold idea of God; if we do not need to make distinctions that will show God to the world, not only as Father, but as Redeemer and Friend. To which we can only reply that he is indeed a poor kind of father who is not both redeemer and friend to his children; who does not with great gladness of heart assist them to find deliverance from evil, and attend them with loving solicitude in all their ways. We have really said it all in that one word, "Father," if we will give to the word the significance which our best human life enables us to put into it; for that love of God, which is the very life of our life, is fountain of all light, and purity, and strength.

The second word of the old baptismal formula is but the other side of this same great truth: the Fatherhood of God means the Sonship of Man. "The Spirit itself beareth witness," writes Saint Paul, "that we are children

of God: and if children, then heirs; joint-heirs with Christ." The belief that the Christian Apostle who framed that sentence recognized but one Son of God, is too preposterous to be seriously debated.

God incarnate in Christ, reproduced in him, as the likeness of the Father's mind and spirit may be reproduced in a son; and this one supreme incarnation the type and symbol of God's work in the hearts of all his children, when that work can be made complete, — such, as nearly as we can state it in the language of to-day, we may assume to have been the thought with which Christianity began.

Let us frankly confess a difficulty which the religious life encounters in trying to reach up to the stature of this thought. So far do our hopes, and dreams, and anticipations outrun our power to realize the divine things set before us, that, when we say we are children of God, there is a certain tendency to think and speak as if we had already reached the mark of our high calling. The mischief which this works is in some loss of sense of the transcendent difference between the life of Christ and the common life of the world; so that people who ought to be looking in humblest adoration upon an image of divine perfection which is perhaps ages in advance of anything that they can boast, become disposed to question whether that glorious pattern of divine manhood has not been already equalled or surpassed.

The hard, frozen buds of winter might as well assume equality with midsummer's open and resplendent flower, as for us to think that we have come near the moral and spiritual attributes of the mind of Christ. Powers and capacities still latent in our hearts have yet to be awakened, and disciplined by many a hard experience, before we can be sons of God on the same level with that wondrous teacher of mankind.

Unless the life of Christ retains its supreme significance before the mind, it seems that, being no longer fed from the glory of his nature, the light is apt to fade from the conception of a divine humanity. We confess this difficulty which has to be met in preaching the gospel that all men are sons of God.

But, on the other hand, what can it mean to you and me more than the narrowest kind of salvation, into a stale and profitless heaven, if only once have God and man come together in the same tabernacle of flesh? Unless we also bear a divine life in our souls, there can be no example for us in him who, confessedly, did what no man can do except God be with him; and that in our place, though we are far removed from the Father's house, we have the Father's spirit to direct us home, is our one reasonable ground of hope for forgiveness, for welcome, and for everlasting life.

And so we come to the third great word of this time-honored compendium of Christian faith, the Holy Spirit, — a term which under dogmatic treatment has sunk to so low estate that apparently nobody cares, or thinks much about it, from that point of view, save as it sonorously rounds out the phrase; but which in a more vital thought and experience still lives, with all its ancient thrill of joy and hope.

The world is full of a wondrous presence of which we try to make no exact image in our thought, — a presence which so besets us behind and before that if we ascend up into heaven it is there, and if we make our bed in the grave, behold, it is there. We do not think of this formless spirit as being the whole of God. It is, as it were, the hand of God especially reached out to us; it is the power of God put forth to enlighten and cleanse our souls; it is the living bond between that mysterious One who sums up all being and that other equally mysterious unit of existence which each one calls himself.

We cannot separate or distinguish between this spirit and the eternal love; but none the less the word answers to something in our own experience; it serves to bring nearer to our consciousness a divine might which has for us its special meaning, and its particular work to do in our hearts. What impression the energy of the sun would make upon us if we could stand midway in the celestial space above us, we do not know; but there is much reason to think that it would neither illuminate us, nor give us warmth. Yet, reaching our atmosphere, that energy is light to our eyes and vital heat to all that live. So the Holy Spirit is God in our present human world, — God round about us in these shadowed ways, the healer, the comforter, the inspirer of this earthly life. Would that the time sufficed to show at length how large a part this idea is coming to play in the best religious life of our time; and how many, to whom God and Christ are not now very near, are being fed from day to day, as the lonely Prophet of Israel is said to have been ministered to by birds of the air, through the instinctive reliance of their souls upon an ever present Holy Spirit!

But though the emphasis may thus shift from age to age, from one to another of these three great words, so that now it is God the Father, and now it is he who holds such pre-eminence as might belong to God's first-born son, and now it is a more vague and cloud-like presence called the Holy Spirit, in which some portion of the Church chiefly believes and trusts; yet Christianity has need of all these words which have so much shaped its history, and it is a wise tradition that holds fast to them, as they stand joined in one of the most ancient expressions of our faith.

They will live long after present doubts as to the realities for which they stand have drifted away, like shadows of clouds passing across the sky; for the long past is too sure a warrant of future continuance to permit us to lose

heart among the changes of our time. Because, in close study of the methods of life, men have for a little while lost something of their grasp upon the higher philosophy of existence, that does not imply that the mind will never again ask questions as to the source and meaning of it all. And when men do ask these questions, with intent to find an answer, they are certain to come back at last from all their wanderings to that profoundest teaching which the world has ever received, given by him who bade his disciples go among all nations, teaching and baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

UNITARIANISM IN AMERICA

A History of its Origin and Development

By George Willis Cooke, Member of the American Historical Association, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Academy of Political and Social Science, etc.

Size, 5 3-4 x 8 1-2 inches; pages, 463; 21 full-page illustrations; price, $2.00 *net;* postage, 14 cents additional.

THE purpose of this work is to furnish a complete, impartial, and candid record of the origin and growth of American Unitarianism, with accounts of its organization, its progress, and its relation to all present-day movements for social and religious betterment, all of which is presented in "the true spirit of the historical method, without reference to local interests and without sectional preferences." Controversial treatment is thus happily avoided. The author has made long and thorough examination of original manuscripts and journals, as well as many magazines, newspapers, and printed reports of various kinds. The result has been to bring together into a single octavo volume of 475 pages much valuable material, heretofore to be found only in widely scattered sources, and a large array of facts not obtainable elsewhere. The volume is fully indexed, making all references to any one topic readily accessible. The book thus becomes a valuable reference work as well as a thoroughly readable and instructive history. It has been written with special reference to its helpfulness in explaining the Unitarian attitude and temper.

The opening chapters begin with the English Sources of American Unitarianism, followed by chapters upon the Liberal Side of Puritanism, the Growth of Democracy in the Churches, and the Silent Advance of Liberalism. Then follows the organization of the American Unitarian Association, and its various activities as the national executive organization of our churches are fully set forth. Chapters are given to the accounts of the Sunday School Society, the Boston Fraternity of Churches, the Women's National Alliance, the Post-office Mission, and other enterprises which mark the spirit of Unitarian endeavor. The relation of Unitarianism to philanthropy, reforms, education, and literature, receive special chapters of unusual interest. The closing chapter treats of the future of Unitarianism.

In addition to the text itself are twenty-one full-page half-tone portrait illustrations of prominent Unitarian leaders, including a frontispiece of Channing. These grouped pictures add not a little to the general interest of the volume.

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CHANNING'S NOTE BOOK

Passages from the Unpublished Manuscripts of William Ellery Channing. Selected by his granddaughter, Grace Ellery Channing

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 110; price, 50 cents *net;* postage, 5 cents.

THE origin and character of this book add to the interest of the contents, in that the "Notes" of which it is made up are from the unpublished manuscripts left by Channing. They have been carefully gathered, and are here given without revision or change of any kind. The desire to preserve their integrity has resulted in the retention of the incomplete sentences and abrupt constructions of the original, which were written for purposes of personal reference. This is more than atoned for, however, in the vigor and freedom of expression, and the entire absence of self-restraint, which bring one into closer touch with the characteristics of Channing's thought and character. The Notes are not at all theological in character or treatment, and for that reason they present in this form another and broader view of Channing himself.

PRAYERS

By Theodore Parker. With a Preface by Louisa M. Alcott, and a Memoir by F. B. Sanborn

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 218; price, 75 cents *net;* postage, 7 cents.

"IT is in the very spirit of devotion, the gentle or the martial, that these prayers were conceived and uttered. Like so many of his predecessors in the New England pulpit, Theodore Parker was 'mighty in prayer.' It was the natural language of his soul."—*Mr. Sanborn, in his* MEMOIR.

"Parker's prayers were one of the strongest attractions of his church, and did much to win and soften souls, after his unsparing hand had torn away the veil behind which so many hide even from themselves. Like spring rains on newly plowed fields, came mercy after justice. . . . Perhaps the secret of the worth and beauty of these prayers lies in the fact that his life illustrated them so truly that those who knew him felt he had a right to pray."—*Miss Alcott, in the* PREFACE.

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[No. 109]

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

BY

REV. MINOT J. SAVAGE, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

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WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

If one were to judge by the claims of ministers, of ecclesiastical associations, denominational newspapers and reviews; if one were to judge from the creeds, — he would suppose that Christianity came suddenly and full-grown into the world; that it leaped from the thought of God as Minerva was fabled to have leaped, fully developed and in complete armor, from the forehead of Jupiter.

You would suppose that in the time of Jesus and his apostles the creed, the ceremony, the practice, the entire Christian system, were developed. You would suppose that it had been recognized that the world was in a special condition of loss, and that this plan of salvation, definitely and fully outlined, was suddenly revealed to men. And yet we are face to face with a curious fact if that be true.

The Church of Rome claims to be the only and original church, and regards the Greek Church and all Protestants as so absolutely astray as to have no right to the name of Christian; the Greek Church regards the Church of Rome and all Protestants as in a similar hopeless condition; while all the Protestant churches regard the Church of Rome and the Greek Church as departures from the primitive simplicity of Christianity, and as being mixed up with and overloaded by forms and ceremonies and doctrines which have been borrowed from pagan sources.

If there was a clear, a consistent, a definite revelation

of those things that are essential to Christianity at the very outset, is not this confusion and contradiction a little strange and hard to understand?

Let us inquire, then, for a little, as to what are the facts, the historic facts, the facts which are not questioned by anybody who is simply looking to find what is true.

We shall discover, then, that Christianity is in line with evolution, is an illustration of evolution. Instead of its coming into the world fully developed, full-grown, we shall recognize the fact that a seed was planted, and that it grew year after year, century after century, gathering material on every hand from pagan and Christian sources, and that, instead of its having reached a fixed and final form during the first century, or the fifth or the tenth or the eighteenth, it has never reached a fixed and final form, never will reach it, never can reach it, in the nature of things. For everything in this universe is undergoing either one of two processes: it is growing, or it is decaying. And in either case it is not standing still; it is changing.

In spite, however, of these obvious facts and principles, you will find the most extravagant claims made in certain directions.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church says that it believes that which has always been believed by all men everywhere. So it claims to be catholic, or general, or universal in its belief. All Protestants make a similar claim, so far as the completeness and finality of revelation are concerned. The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Storrs, the famous Congregationalist preacher of Brooklyn, is reported to have said, not many years ago, that the idea of progress in theology was absurd, — meaning, of course, that since, as he believes, it had been completely and finally revealed once for all, there could be no growth or change in it.

But let us now look for a little, glancing along the line of historic advance, and see what we really discover; and

then at the end we will try to see, if we may, what are the essential things in Christianity.

And first I wish you to note the growth of belief concerning the nature and the authority of Jesus himself.

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." This, of course, was a good many years after the death of Jesus. It was applied to them, undoubtedly, as a nickname, — a name of opprobrium, contempt. A great many of the grandest names of the world have been applied in a similar way, so that we need not be ashamed of it on that account. But what did it mean? What was a Christian, for example, in the time of Paul?

And here let me suggest to you, if you wish to read the New Testament in its order, so as to get the growth of thought, read Paul's epistles first, beginning with Galatians. For these were the first parts of the New Testament, and were written years and years before either of the Gospels came into its present shape.

Now, what was a Christian during the time that Paul was writing these epistles? Only one single thing was necessary to convert a Jew into a Christian. The Jew believed that a Messiah was to come; the Christian believed that the Messiah the Jews had been looking for had come, and that Jesus was he.

That is all that constituted a Christian during the first century, and you will find that it is the burden of Paul's preaching. He went up and down the world proclaiming — what? If you have even a superficial knowledge of the writings of the New Testament, you will recognize the echo of this verse. The one thing that Paul drove home by argument and appeal to the understanding, the consciences, the hearts of his hearers, was that this Jesus who had been crucified was the Christ; and "Christ," you know, is only the Greek "Christos," the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah.

Paul preached, then, that Jesus was the Messiah; and accepting this is what constituted a Christian. But the process of development in regard to the Christian thought about Jesus had only now begun.

And let me ask you to remember, if you think it strange that such a process should have gone on, — remember that Christianity was born in the midst of a time and conditions when it was the commonest thing in the world to deify men. Greek and Roman hero after hero had been deified by the popular imagination and lifted up into the heavens. There was no god in all the Roman Empire so widely worshipped during the reign of Augustus, and for a hundred or two years after his time, as was the Emperor Augustus himself. His image, his shrine, lined all the roads and highways, and was found in the peasants' cottages throughout the Roman Empire.

So then it was not a strange thing among the Greeks and among the Romans that this process of deifying should take place. It was, or would have been, a very strange thing among the Jews. They held such a spiritual conception of God, and regarded him as withdrawn by nature and distance so far from his world, that it would have seemed to them nothing short of outright blasphemy to compare with him any creature born of woman. So that this doctrine never could have sprung up among the Jews. And, as you know, it never found any lodgment among the Jews; the Jews never became Christians.

It grew up among the Greeks and the Romans, where, as I have said to you, this process was one of the commonplaces of the time. But it was not in the first century. First was the thought that he was the Messiah. The next step was the belief that he was the second Adam. You will find Paul teaching this. The first Adam was the head of this fallen humanity of ours. Christ, Paul believed, was divinely appointed to be the head of a new and spiritual

order of humanity that was to supersede the old and carnal order of the past.

Then after that came another step. Jesus came to be regarded as a pre-existent being, the Lord or Master from heaven, the first-born of every creature, — but, remember, creature still, infinitely removed from the divine source of all.

Then at last the final step was taken, and Jesus was elevated to the position of sharing with the Father his own divine nature. But how long did it take for this process to culminate?

As you look back down the ages, facts and movements get massed together in such a way that you do not notice how far they are apart. Just as, for example, if you are standing looking along lengthwise of a row of trees, those trees might be half a mile apart, but they would look to you as if they were close together; so, as you look down the ages toward the beginning of things, events seem to crowd each other, though there were centuries between.

So, as a matter of fact, it was more than three hundred years before the belief in the deity of Jesus became a test of orthodoxy.

If it became necessary, then, to believe in the deity of Jesus in order to be a Christian, in order to be saved, then there were no Christians in the world for three hundred years, and none of the church members of all that time had any chance of being saved. For the doctrine of the deity of Jesus was not promulgated as an orthodox doctrine until the year 325 at the Council of Nice, at the time that the Nicene Creed was formed.

And how was the decision reached at that time? We ought to know some of these primary facts. Was it reached because the people had any new evidence on the subject that they did not have while Jesus was walking in

the fields of Galilee? Was it reached because the people were wiser? Was it built out of evidence?

Nothing of the kind. It was simply the result of philosophical speculation; it was the attempt to bridge over an imaginary gulf supposed to exist between God and his world. And the bishops fought over it not in a very Christian temper. There never was a bitterer factional fight in Tammany Hall than that which finally decided the doctrines of the Nicene Creed; and they were not decided until the Emperor Constantine threw in the weight of his imperial decision against Arius and in favor of Athanasius.

And why did he do it? Did Constantine know anything about it? Was he an example of Christian piety? He was one of the most treacherous, murderous emperors that ever lived. He cared nothing for the principles involved one way or the other; it was simply a matter of governmental policy with him.

Thus the Nicene Creed was born, born after the struggle of three hundred years and more.

Now, as to the other two great creeds of Christendom, let me say a word or two concerning them.

The chancellor of the University of New York, two or three weeks ago, published in one of our great Sunday newspapers the statement that the Apostles' Creed was written eighteen hundred years ago. I do not know whether the chancellor was napping at the time he wrote it. I cannot think that he was ignorant. I cannot think that he would purposely take advantage of the supposed ignorance of his readers. You would suppose, to hear people talk, — there are twelve clauses in the Apostles' Creed, — that the apostles stood up in a row, and one of them recited one clause and another another until they finished the creed, and that it dates back to their time.

As a matter of fact, the Apostles' Creed was never heard

of for five hundred years after the birth of Jesus. Nobody knows who wrote it, or whether there is any authority connected with it or not. We know that the people of that time were very ignorant about this world, and I for one do not know why I should suppose they knew everything about the other. It is a purely anonymous production, of absolutely no authority whatsoever.

If, however, let me say, it be necessary in order to be a Christian that one should accept the Apostles' Creed, then what becomes of the people who lived after the birth of Christ for five hundred years before there was any Apostles' Creed?

Now for the other great Christian symbol, as it is called, — the Athanasian Creed. And let me remind you right here, for it is a matter of a good deal of importance, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not fully developed in either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. It does not come to its last explicit statement until the promulgation of the Athanasian Creed.

I do not know why it should be called the Athanasian Creed. Athanasius lived in the fourth century, and was the great adversary of Arius in the struggle out of which came the Nicene Creed. Yet this creed is named for him. As I say, I do not know why — unless it is supposed that it represents what Athanasius would have believed if he had lived at the time the creed was formed.

This Athanasian Creed has been dropped out of the Prayer Book of the American churches, but it is still binding on every Anglican, and must be subscribed to by all the clergy of the Anglican Church. It is very long, metaphysical, and goes into a particular definition of the Trinity. But when was it promulgated?

Not until the ninth century. More than eight hundred years had gone by in the history of the Church before the Athanasian Creed appeared. And this creed has attached

to it what is called the "damnatory clause," very famous in theological discussion.

What is that clause? It declares that unless a man believe every part of this Athanasian Creed he shall no doubt perish everlastingly.

Again let me ask, if it be absolutely necessary to believe the Athanasian Creed in order to be a Christian, if it be necessary to believe it in order to be saved, what becomes of not only the world for several hundreds of thousands of years, but what becomes of the first eight hundred years of the Christian Church before the Athanasian Creed was heard of?

Such strange claims and such strange alternatives!

Now I want to ask you to note a few facts concerning the real teaching of Jesus and his apostles.

If it be necessary to believe the Athanasian Creed to be a Christian, or the Nicene Creed to be a Christian, or even the Apostles' Creed to be a Christian, then we are fronted with the somewhat startling fact that not one single one of the apostles was a Christian according to any record we have of them; and Jesus himself was not a Christian!

Study if you will, read with a little care, the first three Gospels. I omit the fourth because most competent scholars agree that the fourth Gospel is not so much a life of Jesus as it is a theological treatise. They believe that it was written, not by John, but by some unknown hand somewhere during the first half of the second century. Nobody knows who wrote it, and it carries not the authority of an eye-witness or a hearer at all.

But let me note that even in the Gospel of John there is no teaching of the doctrine of the Trinity. In it — and I have had the text quoted to me hundreds of times as though it settled the question, and that is the reason I quote it now — Jesus is represented as saying, "I and my Father are one." But, unfortunately for the argument, he

is represented as praying in the immediate context that the disciples may be one with him precisely as he is one with the Father.

So, if the first text proves the deity of Jesus, the other one, also reported from the lips of Jesus, proves the deity of all the disciples.

But, as you read the first three Gospels, there is a conspicuous absence of almost every single doctrine that is regarded as essential.

If Jesus, as the second person in the Trinity, came into this world on purpose to save people from the fall, does it not seem a little strange that he does not anywhere make the slightest allusion to it?

Jesus never said anything about the fall of man, or Adam, or Eve, or the serpent, or anything of the kind, — apparently knows nothing about them. He says nothing about the doctrine of the atonement; he says nothing about the Trinity.

There is hardly anything which according to these popular creeds is essential to Christianity which Jesus anywhere touches or appears to care about in any way whatever.

There has been then, I say, this progress, this growth, from generation to generation and from century to century, of what has come to be called Christian belief. And that belief has never been absolutely fixed concerning any one of these great doctrines.

If I had time to enter into a discussion of the doctrine of the atonement, I could show you that concerning it a similar thing is true.

For the first thousand years of Christian history the Church Universal believed in some form that the sufferings and death of Jesus were a price paid to the devil for the redemption of mankind. That is, they believed that by right of conquest Satan had come to be the ruler of mankind, the king of this world. And God agreed with

the devil to let him have, to torture and put to death, his old adversary, the leader of the angels before he was cast out, as the price of the redemption of men. This was the doctrine for a thousand years. God is represented as having cheated or outwitted the devil. The devil supposed he was going to keep Jesus forever. He did not know there was anything divine about his nature; and so, even after he had entered into the bargain, he lost the price on which he had agreed.

I am not caricaturing the doctrine: I am simply stating what was written and preached for a thousand years.

And this doctrine of the atonement has passed through ten or fifteen or twenty transformations since that day.

So in regard to any one of the great doctrines. Instead of there having been an original and clear and defined revelation of divine truth at the first, held throughout the Church the entire length of its history, there has been change from age to age; and there is nothing that all those who wish to call themselves Christians are agreed upon to-day as to what is essential to Christianity. Still, the Greek Church and the Roman Church and the Protestant churches are pitted against one another, and the different denominations of the Protestant churches against one another, and all of them against us Unitarians, who claim the right to be free and accept the results of modern study and investigation.

Now, let us raise the question from the point of view of the modern world as to what is essential in Christianity.

The ceremonies, are they? The cult? Do you know, there is nothing original in the cult? Almost every single one of the ceremonies in the Church are pagan in origin and hundreds of years older than Christianity. For example, the eucharist, holy water, baptism, — all this ceremonial can be traced to Egypt and other parts of the pagan world long before Christianity was heard of.

Is it the doctrines? We have already seen that there is no consensus of opinion in regard to the acceptance of the doctrines. But hardly a single one of the doctrines is original with Christianity.

You find the Trinity in Egypt, in India, all over the antique world. You find the virgin-birth in almost every one of the great pagan religions. A dozen, twenty, twenty-five heroes and demigods have been virgin-born. Almost every one of these doctrines can be paralleled in the history of Buddhism. There is, to-day, in one of the churches in Europe a statue of Isis and Horus, the virgin mother and her child, from ancient Egypt, rechristened, and doing duty for Mary and Jesus.

So little, then, are these doctrines original.

What is it, then, that Christianity brought to the world, which we cling to with passionate love to-day and are not willing to let go?

The great contribution to the world which Christianity has made, which is original, which is unique, which is precious to every loving and tender heart, is the ideal of the life, the character, the spirit, the teaching of the Nazarene; Jesus, his spiritual attitude, his love, his human sympathy, his tenderness, his sacrifice, his willingness to help.

These are the essential things in Christianity, and these alone.

The doctrines as they have been held in the past are all of them destined to pass away. The thing that we cling to in this modern world and are going to cling to more and more is simply the ascertained truth of the universe as fast and far as it can be discovered. This is to be the external form and framework of things; here is the material out of which we are to construct our theological theories, — for theological theories we shall construct in the future as men have constructed them in the past.

But the one thing that grows brighter, and fairer, and sweeter, age after age, is this, — the Christ ideal, that luminous, leading star of human hope and of divine helpfulness. There is nothing to match it in any other religion, nothing so sweet, nothing so fair, nothing so tender.

The spiritual attitude of Jesus seems to me simply perfect. I cannot understand how in any age in the future it can be outgrown. I am not referring to the limited thought of Jesus, — Jesus shared with his age many of the intellectual theories which the world has already outgrown, — I am referring now to his spiritual attitude. Was there ever anything diviner in the history of man than that simple, childlike, perfect trust in the Father? Trust for every day, trust for every night; a trust when he was hungry, a trust when he was lonely and sorrowful; a trust when the great hopes of his life had been dashed and seemed to be passing away.

I think there is nothing so sublime in the history of all the past as that figure of Jesus on the cross that Friday afternoon outside the walls of the city, surrounded by the Roman soldiers and the mob, — he, the gentle teacher, he who loved his friends and who so loved his enemies that, as he was swooning into death, he said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Hanging there with all of his hopes an apparent failure, wondering whether God himself had not forgotten and let go his hand, and yet with a trust that still clung in the darkness and the weakness, so that he fainted through death into immortal triumph. The victory over the thought, the love, the reverence, the worship of mankind, such as has never been won by any other historic figure in all the world! This perfect trust in the Father!

I know of nothing finer than this spiritual attitude of Jesus.

And then that other side of his nature, his relation towards his fellow-men. A service unstinted! Nothing grander was ever said about any man that ever lived than was said about Jesus: "He made himself of no reputation;" he cared nothing for fame or human greatness; "he went about doing good;" he sacrificed time, strength, love, gave himself utterly that he might help one of the least of these his brethren.

I say, then, that the Christianity of the future is to be made up of these two elements: all truth for the theological side, however gained and through whatever source; then the spiritual attitude towards God and towards man of Jesus.

Now if the churches can ever prove that these two are not Christian, then it will be the saddest day that Christianity has ever seen. For they will have proved that there is something in the world that is better than Christianity. For there can be nothing finer than this: — truth for the thought side; the spirit and temper of Jesus for the feeling, the aspiration side.

There can be nothing finer than that, nobler than a combination like that.

Now let us at the end, just one moment, notice the one solemn utterance of Jesus on this subject. If he be correctly reported, he is setting forth for all time what in his judgment are the conditions of entrance into heaven. Here is this solemn scene of judgment, the sheep on his right hand, the goats on his left. He sends one of them into outer darkness, and the other into eternal felicity.

I am not discussing the question of future punishment now; I simply wish you to fix your attention on the conditions of admission to heaven as Jesus sets them forth.

Now, when he speaks to those on his right hand, that he calls the blessed of his Father and who are to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, what does he say?

Does he catechise them as to what they believed? Not one single syllable of belief in any doctrine whatsoever. Nothing about foreordination; nothing about the Bible; nothing about the Trinity; nothing about his own character or authority. Simply as to whether they have been good. Good, that is all! Have they helped, have they tried to lessen the sum of human misery? Have they cared for their fellow-man? Not a word about ceremony, about membership in a church; not a word about any priesthood; not one single thing that all the churches to-day are declaring to be absolutely essential to Christian character and Christian life, — not one word about any of them!

Those who have tried to be good and help their fellow-men are the ones before whose feet the door of eternal felicity opens with welcome. And the others are condemned, not for lack of belief, but simply for lack of character and conduct, nothing else!

Now, then, let me say here as my final word, according to the standards of the popular churches to-day, not a single one of the apostles was a Christian, and Jesus was not a Christian; and if Jesus should come here to New York in this year 1897, and should go before a board of examiners, petitioning for admission into any one of the churches, there is not a single one that could take him in, provided they asked of him the same questions which they ask other candidates.

And, though they all say that we Unitarians are not Christians, I verily believe that if Jesus were here he would find himself welcome in the midst of our simple service that teaches just what he taught, — the love of God and the service of man as the great essentials of all true religion.

[No. 110]

A PLEA FOR SINCERITY

IN

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

BY

REV. JOSEPH H. CROOKER, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. Annual subscriptions of any amount are solicited. Address communications and contributions to the Secretary at his office, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. The following is the simple

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I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

A PLEA FOR SINCERITY IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

I.

The Presbyterian General Assembly of the United States (1898) has just taken a notable position, which marks an epoch in religious history. I refer to its action in the case of Prof. Arthur C. McGiffert, of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, in answer to a petition that he be tried for heresy. Professor McGiffert has recently published a book, entitled "The Apostolic Age," in which conclusions respecting the origin and character of the New Testament writings and theories of the person and message of Jesus are stated, which contradict the cardinal teachings of the Westminster Confession. It is not to the point to say that many of the opinions here set forth are generally accepted by leading specialists in Biblical criticism and historical scholarship. They strike at the vital and central principles of Presbyterian theology; and the Presbyterian Church cannot ignore so serious a matter.

What the General Assembly has done is this: *It has raised the question of honor, which ought to be sufficient.* It would be sufficient anywhere else but in church circles. In what we call the worldly world, when a man reaches a position out of harmony with his associates, he does not

try to force himself upon them. The Presbyterians, in appealing to the sense of honor, have taken both a manly and a politic position. This marks the beginning of a new era; it ought no longer to be necessary to prosecute a man for heresy. The Assembly practically says to Professor McGiffert: "You know just what our Presbyterian doctrines are. If you have reached different views, we appeal to you as an honorable man quietly to leave our fellowship. Conform to our standards or openly withdraw from our church. That is the only kindness to us, the only loyalty to your new views, the only path of self-respect, the surest means of progress, if that is what you seek, and the truest service to morality in general." This is wise and wholesome. It frees the problem from evasion, confusion, bitterness, and injustice.

The importance of this step cannot be over-estimated. It marks a turning-point in church history. The Assembly has covered itself with glory. *The tonic breath of a diviner air blows through this dismal and noxious region.* Let the question of honor be pressed. Let all men in the position of Professor McGiffert be urged to take this matter into the court of absolute sincerity and pass judgment upon themselves. The fundamental question is not, What liberty does the Confession permit? but, What does loyalty to the truth demand? Greater than the fortune of the Presbyterian Church, and more urgent than progress, is the necessity for integrity. The problem is now where it ought to be, not in the hands of inquisitors nor in the keeping of mere casuists, but at the bar of personal honor.

II.

And yet, there are some who strenuously plead for another course. Prominent religious teachers urge ministers to ignore their ordination vows and openly preach doctrines absolutely contrary to the unrevised creeds of the churches of which they are servants. Those who take this position condemn the practice of believing one thing and preaching another. They advocate sincerity; but they hold that it is perfectly honest for an Episcopal rector to read the Prayer Book and at the same time preach against the resurrection. It is perfectly honest for a Presbyterian minister to denounce Calvinism and recite the Confession. It is perfectly honest for a Methodist clergyman to teach salvation by righteousness in place of the doctrine of salvation by grace, as laid down in the Book of Discipline. All this, to me, is a more dangerous form of insincerity than the crude deception of the common hypocrite.

But this policy has recently been advocated by several editorials in the "Outlook." The following statements have there been made: "We say, therefore, to every liberal minister in a conservative church, Stay where you are, and preach the truth as God gives you to see the truth, without fear, without favor. . . . We advise the Presbyterian to remain in the church in which he has been brought up, and preach the freedom of faith for which his Puritan ancestry were willing to lay down their lives." ("Outlook," Feb. 5, 1898, p. 315.) "That liberty [freedom of growth] is explicitly and in terms provided for by all such as have creeds to which their clergy subscribe. . . . In whatever Protestant pulpit you may stand you are entitled to liberty." ("Outlook," March 19, 1898, pp. 710, 711.) "The very question at

issue is this: Shall a liberal minister in a conservative church withdraw, or shall he go on preaching his liberalism and leave on his brethren in the church the responsibility of determining whether they will exclude him from their communion? We counsel the latter course." ("Outlook," April 9, p. 908.)

III.

The problem in debate is too important for personal passion or petty controversy, too serious for indifference or levity, and too sacred to be approached except with the profoundest moral earnestness. And the point involved in this discussion is shortly to become the storm-centre of the religious world. The momentous question, soon to be forced upon the churches, is not the truth or utility of this or that particular dogma, but the far deeper and more important question. Are we to have frankness or duplicity, sincerity or dishonesty, in our pulpits? The time is near at hand when the common people will demand perfect manliness and unequivocal speech on the part of religious teachers. All parties will some day insist that the only dangerous heresy is insincerity. The minister must be as open-minded and as candid in speech as the scientist.

Do the Creeds grant Liberty? My disagreement with those who take the position advocated by the "Outlook" is most decisive and radical. It lies at this point: Is the Orthodox minister, whose ordination vow binds him to a definite creed, written or implied, given perfect liberty of growth and complete freedom of progress? I contend that such is not the case, and therefore, if he ignore his ordination vow and preach other doctrines, he does what

is essentially immoral. He violates a solemn compact; he outrages a sacred obligation; he profanes a holy trust. Therefore my criticism pertains, first, to a question of fact, and then to a problem in ethics. In passing, let me say that I do not presume to pass judgment upon the motives of individuals; I condemn positions and policies. And while I wish to plead my cause with earnestness, I desire to remember the duty of charity and shun the appearance of self-righteousness.

It is asserted that liberty of opinion and freedom of growth are fully provided for in all the creeds. The language is: "Liberty [freedom of growth] is explicitly and in terms provided for by all such as have creeds to which their clergy subscribe." This is a most astonishing statement. It is contradicted by the creeds themselves, by the teachings of history, and by our common knowledge.

Why are Creeds made? The plain, obvious, and central reason for having a creed is to make belief uniform and permanent, — to prevent changes of faith. Doctrines are formulated to be maintained, not to be set aside. One does not hoop a barrel simply to have its hoops broken. Those who believe in religious progress do not make creeds. They have convictions, but these convictions are allowed to remain flexible and subject to growth. The Augsburg and Westminster divines did not intend to manufacture a vehicle of religious development that would carry the church beyond their own theological positions. They were not creating a method for the outgrowth of their own ideas. They were devising a barrier against changes. Protestant liberty involved vastly more than they realized, but to them it did not mean freedom of opinion. Their creed-making and their persecution of dissenters amply prove this. We must

not credit them with motives which are the product of later ages.

Let the Creeds speak. Look into the creeds themselves. In all the confessions in Schaff's ponderous volumes, entitled "The Creeds of Christendom," there is not one article that grants liberty to outgrow the creed. Do you anywhere read: "All those who subscribe this creed may outgrow it as soon as possible"? Is it anywhere written: "Use your reason freely, and lay hold of a better religious belief as soon as possible"? Did you ever hear any one in an Orthodox Church recite this *credo:* "I believe in the freedom of the soul to outgrow the established forms of religious faith"? You cannot find it, or any equivalent, in a single Orthodox manual. It would be an absurdity from the Orthodox point of view to tolerate such an attitude toward a revealed system of infallible doctrines such as Evangelicals claim to possess. The creeds insist on being believed, and not on being outgrown. The Prayer Book does not keep an open door before every young rector, inviting him to pass beyond the Apostles' Creed. This would be utterly irrational as long as Episcopalians base the Prayer Book upon a supernatural revelation.

The Verdict of History. The contention is not supported by the facts of history. The creeds have not been helps, but grave hindrances to human development. We may admit their beneficent services in other directions, but they have neither allowed growth nor sanctioned progress. They claim to be the statements of revealed and final truths; and as such, they have been a bond limiting the freedom of the mind. They have blocked the way of every discoverer. They have made the progress of knowledge a bloody pathway to martyrdom. Can any one read Andrew D. White's "Warfare

of Science," and then say that the creeds grant perfect freedom of thought and encourage progress? The multiplication of sects completes the disproof of the assumption. Why a dozen kinds of Presbyterians, if the Confession allows complete freedom? Why a score of different Methodist churches, if the Methodist pulpit is the freest of all places? Why this constant march of dissenters out of the old churches, if the creed provides ample room for growth? For a long period I annually met scores of university students in painful trouble at this point. Why all those tragic and pathetic experiences in making their way to a larger spiritual life, if creeds are so very hospitable to progress in theology?

The Westminster Confession. We must appreciate the creed-makers, though we reject their dogmas; but the obligation to appreciate all that is good in other churches does not include commendation of those who juggle with the terms of ancient standards. To be charitable to all churches, it is not necessary to ignore real distinctions or to pretend that creeds are really different from what they are. Also, we may well emphasize the things common to all faiths, but we must not commend those who are unfaithful to the creed under whose banner they march.

In determining what the Westminster Confession really allows in the line of freedom and progress, we must consider the conditions under which it was produced. The question is not: What can I make it mean by a little twisting and stretching here and there? but, What was the intention of the men who framed it? And it is perfectly clear what they tried to do. They assumed to tabulate the scheme of salvation as revealed in Scripture. They did this to establish the true faith; to make belief

uniform and permanent. They looked upon the central dogmas as finalities. They did not expect them ever to be outgrown. They opened no door to free inquiry. They granted no freedom of growth. They were not advocates of progress in religion. They made this Confession to be believed; and they provided in the instrument itself stringent methods, not for its outgrowth, but for its enforcement. It is only in recent times, under the pressure of scientific discovery and the modern spirit, that men have sought in it authority for progress or liberty.

How much Freedom? But there are men among us who contend: I am free, because the Confession allows me to appeal from it to Scripture! But how much does this really mean? Freedom to set aside the Confession? Certainly not, although this alone is adequate liberty. For no scientific student would feel himself free unless at liberty to outgrow the text-book that he uses. This provision of the Confession means: Freedom to study the Bible, on condition that you confirm the essentials of the Confession! This is all the Westminster divines expected. If they had believed in more liberty, they would not have made a creed.

But suppose that I study the Bible freely and find no Trinity there. Thousands have reached this conclusion. Now, my point is this: If my study of Scripture compels me to reject the Trinity, does the Confession give me the right to preach my new conviction in a Presbyterian pulpit? I say most emphatically, "No." Then I press the issue: Men are not sufficiently free unless they have that privilege. Suppose, again, that my study shows me that Jesus never taught the dogma of Blood Atonement. Does the Confession give me liberty to proclaim that discovery from a Presbyterian pulpit? One might as well

claim that our Federal constitution allows an American citizen to take up arms against the United States! And yet I must be able to follow the truth faithfully and fearlessly to be perfectly free. But to preach in opposition to sacrificial redemption in a Presbyterian church is immoral. It is a violation of ordination vows. The church would honor itself by the expulsion of any minister attempting it.

Here is another case: Should my free study of the Bible convince me that it does not claim to be infallible, does the Confession grant me liberty to preach that discovery? As a matter of fact, the Bible makes no such claim for itself, but that claim is the basis on which the Confession is built. So that no man can honorably remain in a Presbyterian pulpit and teach that the Bible contains errors, or argue that it does not claim infallibility for itself. And yet a man does not have liberty enough, unless he has freedom to tell the world frankly what he finds in the Scriptures. He is not perfectly free, when he cannot teach what he discovers the Bible to be. The only liberty worth having is freedom to follow Truth though text and creed be left behind. On the other hand, the Confession gives no man a right to teach a view of Scripture which destroys its fundamental assumption that the Bible is infallible. And an increasing number of great scholars tell us that the Bible is not, and does not claim to be, what the Confession assumes it to be. But these discoveries a Presbyterian minister cannot teach without becoming disloyal to his church.

Can a Presbyterian ignore the Atonement? The Confession asserts that man is alone saved by the imputed merits of Jesus. This is a cardinal doctrine in that document. But this doctrine is abhorrent to many people to-day, and they find no adequate support for it

in Scripture, while both science and ethics condemn it. And while I would like to see this false view of God's providence and Jesus' ministry cast out from every creed, I insist that as long as a man stands in a Presbyterian pulpit, he is in honor bound to teach it. The Confession gives him no liberty to set it aside. The moral law gives him no liberty to ignore his ordination vow. If he take into that pulpit a humanitarian view of Jesus, if he reject the expiatory theory of Jesus' death, he subjects himself to the charge of insincerity.

The Congregationalists. The argument here set forth is forcibly strengthened by an appeal to the history of the Congregationalists. The early Independents were Calvinists, but in their covenants they left the door of progress open. They expected growth and provided for it. This was the chief point at issue between them and the Westminster divines. But later, many New England Congregational churches tied themselves up to creeds. They became to some extent *Presbyterianized.* And from this change have come the troubles of the Congregationalists in this country, — troubles that have to some extent been escaped by the more liberal and less creedal Independents in England. One of these disturbances was the division into Orthodox and Unitarian, early in this century; the Unitarians being truer to the primary principles of Independency. Out of this creedal root have come the Andover perplexities and perversities: the inevitable growth disguising itself behind obsolete phrases and stultifying itself by repeated subscriptions to outgrown creeds. All this painful history of the controversy between Andover Seminary and the American Jesus never how prolific of heartache, repression, dis- Does the Confe en duplicity, the system of creed sub- covery from a Pre

And while the Congregational are the freest Evangelical churches among us, nevertheless, each minister, as a rule, is committed at his ordination to a definite system of theology, which he is not expected to outgrow. The recent case of Dr. William J. Long at Cambridge, Mass. [June, 1898], affords forcible confirmation of this statement. Each local church has, as a rule, a formal creed, to which candidates for admission are expected to assent as a finality. Congregationalists are not welcomed into pew or pulpit with explicit command to grow and outgrow, or with definite encouragement to use reason freely as supreme authority. And this is the only condition of perfect religious freedom. For the privilege to go as far as texts permit, the limits set up by creed and council, is not worthy the great and sacred name of liberty. Congregationalists could easily achieve absolute independence and perfect freedom; and many of us would rejoice mightily if they would do this. But at present their pulpits are, as a rule, under bonds.

As a result of the conditions to which reference has been made, we find some Congregational ministers hold ing in private a form of theology at variance with the creed of their own churches, but never frankly and publicly proclaiming it. People are often admitted into the church with a private understanding that they need not believe many things in the old creed, while as far as the public is aware they are loyal advocates of that old creed. What I charge is that these conditions and practices destroy sincerity without granting adequate liberty. On the other hand, the English Presbyterians, never tied up to such a creed as the Westminster Confession, have, by their quiet and steady progress, shown how freedom can be so provided that the religious life may freely

expand without violent revolt or destructive insincerity. Many of the English Presbyterian churches are now openly and honestly in fellowship with the Unitarian movement, but without change of name.

IV.

Authority of the Bible. We come now to another phase of this problem. Is liberty, circumscribed by Scripture, adequate? The writer in the "Outlook" (and he probably represents many others) contends that the Orthodox minister has perfect liberty, and can preach anything that he sees fit without subjecting himself to the charge of insincerity, because he is free to appeal from the creed to the teaching of the Bible. The creed itself guarantees him liberty because it commands him to test every article "*by the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures.*"

But is this contention true? To conform belief to texts, to limit inquiry to the teachings of Isaiah and Paul, to make the Bible final authority, — this may be all the freedom that some people want. But it is only the liberty of the chained eagle and the caged lion! This bondage to texts had to be broken before scientific progress could be made. The Bible final authority? Our scientists all appreciate it, but not one in a hundred considers it a supernatural revelation, and not one in a thousand uses its texts as final authority. The astronomer does not refer to Scripture before accepting what he sees through his telescope. That day has passed. As between texts and facts of observation, he does not hesitate for a moment. The moral teachings of the Bible at the best are sublime, but to abolish slavery the modern conscience had to resort to a higher oracle than Scrip-

ture. While men wore its precepts as yokes, so-called witches were cruelly killed; but when jurists put aside the dogma of Biblical infallibility, then the science of law began. What liberty do I have, if against my conscience I must believe that God sent a lying spirit to deceive Ahab? What freedom do I possess, if against my reason I must believe that God commanded the slaughter of the Midianites?

The Bondage of Texts. Let me emphasize three things: (1) The man who is only free to go as far as texts will permit him is in bondage, — a bondage which had to be destroyed before what we call modern civilization could appear. (2) The Biblical text has ceased to be a final authority in many of the most precious realms of human thought and activity. It is simply impossible to translate all of Scripture into life. The final authority in religion, as in every other department of life, is reason and conscience in appeal to the facts of the universe, in which God resides and presides. Scripture is authoritative only so far as it records the essential laws of life. The ultimate authority is in those laws, not in its language. It is invaluable as a help to the religious life, if rationally and reverently used, but harmful if used to limit thought and restrain love. (3) The Bible itself does not claim to be an infallible authority. It nowhere demands that we confine ourselves to its teachings. The Bible is infinitely better than a revelation with final and absolute authority; it is a wonderful religious literature to be used for instruction and inspiration.

Who is Free? The only man who is perfectly free is he who obeys the living Holy Spirit! We must have liberty to test the creeds by an appeal to the Spirit of God, revealed in the life that now is! The free soul demands a Living God, who still speaks, not a vanished

God, who once spoke. Men say: I am free because I must believe what the Bible teaches! But is it not barely possible that God has spoken a fresh word to humanity in the last two thousand years? Is it not barely possible that God has had as much to do in writing Whittier's poems as in producing the imprecatory psalms, in building a telescope as inerecting Solomon's temple, in the medical discoveries of Jenner and Lister as the sanitary laws of Leviticus? He only is free who is at liberty to believe and live all that God reveals in the ever unfolding discoveries and achievements of humanity.

Is God a Father? And let me call attention for a moment to the inhuman implications of the claim so often put forward in behalf of the Bible: "It alone has saving truth." When I read this sweeping claim for Hebrew texts, I feel my heart growing hot with indignation, and, with a sense of outraged sympathy, I cry: Shame on you for proclaiming a monstrous dogma which consigns a majority of my brethren to blackest night and infinite torment. This is intolerable injustice; this is unthinkable cruelty.

Just so far as you push this claim for the Bible, which it does not make for itself, that far you rule out millions of people from the reach of mercy into the doom of endless misery, — people that your love would save, but whom you sacrifice to the demands of a heartless creed. What a horrible thing to make the countless millions forsaken orphans to whom God sends no loving message! What a horrible thing to set aside as destitute of divine helpfulness Plato's Dialogues, Buddha's Plea for Love, and Zoroaster's mighty Oracles for truth! What a horrible thing to strip God of real Fatherhood, and represent him as so indifferent to the majority of his family that he has sent them no description of the way to heaven!

Good people make this claim for the Bible, but it seems to me a terrible statement, full of practical atheism. The matter at stake is not the value of the Bible, which may be loved tenderly and fruitfully used apart from this loveless dogma, but the central question is: Has God any paternal providence and man any real sonship?

V.

The Question of Honor. But I wish most of all to insist upon the ethical aspects of this problem under discussion. I contend that it is immoral for a minister to preach "new theology" under the flag of the old theology, because the creed grants no such liberty. It is immoral to subscribe the Confession and then teach different doctrines, because the appeal to Scripture allowed does not warrant an abandonment of central dogmas. No matter how acceptable this course may be to some parishioners, it leads downward to moral degeneracy. Though the creed may have become a dead letter to many, the practice of preaching one system of doctrines, while still publicly pledged to another, is a quick method of spiritual death.

Let me make this matter a little clearer and stronger. Suppose, for example, that you are a Baptist minister. Your ordination vow, though you may not have signed an elaborate creed, compels you to baptize by immersion in the name of the Trinity. Is it reasonable to hold that when Baptists ordained you, they freely granted you liberty to outgrow immersion and set aside the Trinity? Most certainly not. And yet, those who approve the editorials in the "Outlook" contend: Stay in the Baptist pulpit and freely preach that immersion is needless and

the Trinitarian belief erroneous. But I say that such a course is dishonest and dishonorable; and I believe that I have the manly and earnest people of all creeds with me. For by that action you violate a sacred trust; you murder truth at the altar; you encourage men to think all religion a farce. As long as you are the minister of that Baptist church, you must immerse members entering the church. Is it honest for you to do this, and then go into the pulpit and speak against immersion? You must use the Trinitarian formula in that rite. Is it honest for you to repeat those words that imply a belief in a triune God, and in the next breath tell the candidate that you have outgrown the Trinitarian dogma? This would be the destruction of religion.

Orthodox Obligations. The ordination vows made by every man who goes into an Orthodox pulpit bind him to preach, as long as he occupies that pulpit, certain doctrines, described in creed, confession, or book of discipline. It is assumed that the scheme of theology imposed is, in its cardinal principles, the final and absolute form of religious truth. As Unitarians, we condemn such creed subscription. We insist that dogmas are not the proper basis of religious organization. But as long as this system prevails, we contend that a man should be loyal to his obligation: Believe or leave! And as long as a man sincerely believes the creed to which he subscribes, he must command universal respect. However narrow his creed, this man is himself safe, and he exerts a saving influence. I am always glad to feel that there is a surplus of truth in all creeds, and a majority of saints in all communions.

When, however, a minister outgrows the creed and rejects essential and important parts of it, the only honorable course is to leave that pulpit. There must be no

hesitancy, no quibbling, no duplicity. When he ceases to believe the creed upon which the church is based, he is in honor bound to leave the church. We may rejoice that a man has outgrown his creed, but we cannot rejoice that he has so outgrown the moral law that he ignores his ordination vows. We may be glad that a man has made progress in religion, but there is something better even than progress, and that is sincerity. No one has made true progress who is disloyal to the principles to which the pulpit in which he stands is dedicated. The most alarming sign of our time is the fact that any one should for a moment think or act otherwise.

It is from this position of common honesty that any man falls when he gives the following advice: "We say, therefore, to every liberal minister in a conservative church: Stay where you are and preach the truth as God gives you to see the truth, without fear, without favor." And he might have added: But with dishonor and the contempt of all earnest people! Most excellent counsel, if those ministers had not taken a solemn vow to do something exactly different. Entirely proper, if they had not pledged themselves not to change their opinions. A worthy course, if the pulpits in which they stand were not dedicated to definite doctrines, to the teaching of which they themselves were solemnly set apart.

Loyalty to our Flag. When I see "old glory" at the masthead, I have a right to infer that loyal Union sailors are on board. If, in case of war with Spain, I should find that they were Spanish tars, I should infer treachery. Likewise, if I see a church spire and read at the base the name "Presbyterian," I have a right to expect that the minister beneath that spire will preach in harmony with the Westminster Confession. If, on entering, I find a man who is a Unitarian except in sincerity, — a man who

repudiates the fundamental principles of Calvinism, — shall I not cry, "Shame"?

Surprising Arguments. But the arguments and illustrations sometimes used in support of this position are most surprising. This is to be done, we are told, to secure peace. But the only peace to be so obtained is the peace of death; for if there is any manhood left in a congregation, its members will demand that their minister be loyal to the creed of the church. This is to be done, we are told, because dogmas are unimportant. But if unimportant, then proclaim it to the world. While the creed is there and you ask the minister to pledge himself to it for all time, the only honorable policy is loyalty to it. This is to be done, we are told, to allow more opportunity for instruction in righteousness. But a minister who violates his ordination vows by continuing in his pulpit after repudiating the doctrines upon which his church is based, has surrendered his commission and authority as a moral teacher.

In seeking support for this unwise and demoralizing teaching, it is asserted that it was a great misfortune that Luther left the mother church. But for one, I cannot so cover with disapproval this heroic Protestant, and ignore the blessings which his followers won for me and the rest of mankind. In like manner the separation of the Puritans from the Anglican Church is called a mistake. But I cannot so far forget my Puritan blood and cover with condemnation the glory of Hooper and Cartwright, John Milton and John Robinson.

The plea is made: No matter what creed you signed, if you reject important parts of it, preach your new thought with tact, but remain in the church built upon that creed, which you subscribed, though now you disbelieve some of its central teachings. And for warrant,

appeal is made to Paul, who, it is claimed, remained a Jewish rabbi to the end, and continued to preach his "new theology" to Jewish synagogues! A more ignoble use of Paul's great name could not be invented; an example more clearly in condemnation of this position could not be found. Paul did not remain a mere rabbi, content with the forms and faiths of the old synagogue. He went out and organized new churches upon the basis of his real faith. He forcibly set aside the old ordinances as outgrown. He did not disguise his new thought by the use of old phrases. He did not settle over a fashionable synagogue and promise to maintain the ancient faith, and then use its pulpit to proclaim a strange gospel. When he preached to Jewish congregations, he entered as a reformer might go into any public meeting, and said: The old order has come to an end, and we must build upon a new foundation.

What we expect. When I ask an Episcopal clergyman to give me something that describes the faiths and forms of his church, he hands me the Prayer Book. When I attend his church, I have a right to expect that he will preach the doctrine of the Trinity, the miraculous birth of Jesus, the blood atonement, the resurrection of the body, and the damnation of unbelievers, because these things are taught in that Prayer Book. If he should say in his sermon that Jesus was simply one of the sons of God born naturally, that there is no resurrection of the body, and that men are not saved by the blood of Christ, I should say that he is not an honest man; he has no right to occupy an Episcopal pulpit. I may be glad that he has outgrown some of the doctrines of the church, but I cannot rejoice when he solemnly reads the Prayer Book and then declares that he does not believe many things in it. His parishioners have a right to demand

that he be loyal to its doctrines. The world has a right to expect that he will obey his ordination vow. If he does not, he is as immoral as the man who sends me goods unlike the samples from which I made my order. But a position equally immoral is implied by language often heard: If you have a new truth, say it, no matter about the Prayer Book. But I say: Be loyal to the Prayer Book as long as you use it. If you have a new truth, then lay down the Prayer Book and go where you can proclaim it in freedom and with honor.

Principle and Practice. Recently an attendant at a prominent Presbyterian church said to me: "My minister rejects the Westminster Confession; and only last Sunday, he said, with great emphasis, that Calvinism is dead!" Apt pupil of the new Jesuitism! And what but this could I say: "Can it be that you approve such a state of affairs? Is it possible that you can rejoice when your minister spurns as dead that system of theology which he himself promised to preach and which is still the basis of his church? Is there no longer any honor in the land? Can you have respect for a minister who scoffs at the primary principle of the Presbyterian church and remains a camp-follower under its flag? If Calvinism is not true, then leave the church or pull down the flag." Such laymen ought to be ashamed of their complicity in dishonor.

It is no justification for the Orthodox minister to argue: "My congregation is satisfied with my liberality." For where is your conscience? Is God satisfied, when you declare from a pulpit still based on Calvinism that Calvinism is dead? No moral lethargy of a congregation can justify a minister in violating his ordination vows. This is not the way to make men honest in business or upright in politics.

Men sometimes argue: It is so commonly assumed in these parts that the creed is a dead letter that ministers are no longer under any obligation to preach its doctrines. But if dead, why not bury it? Why keep, if not to honor? Why subscribe, if not to teach? As a matter of fact, none of the great creed churches has as yet publicly abandoned its fundamental dogmas. None has as yet said to its ministers as they go into the pulpit: Preach freely whatever new truth you may find. Until public and authoritative disavowal is made of such doctrines, both pew and pulpit are involved in dishonor, if the creed is ignored. No, my friend, it is your conscience that is dead! No general acquiescence in ignoring a creed can warrant a man in preaching other doctrines, as long as the creed is the basis of the pulpit in which he stands.

Only a Matter of Emphasis? It is sometimes claimed that all that is involved in the problem under discussion is a question of emphasis! Progress is provided for under all creeds by simply changing the point of emphasis. The Confession fosters freedom, because it allows us, from age to age, to give prominence to its different elements. It is easy to adjust the old system of theology to modern thought and sentiment by placing its dogmas in a new perspective. But for one, I cannot see how a theology rooted in total depravity can be adjusted to the modern conception of human nature by any mere trick of perspective. If one theory is true, the other is false. I cannot understand how "changing the point of emphasis" can make it honest for a man, who signs a creed built upon the infallibility of the Bible, to teach that the Bible contains errors and is simply the world's best religious literature. I cannot approve the casuistry which claims that a promise to believe a definite dogma

includes the privilege of disowning that dogma at one's convenience. The Westminster Confession damns the unelect heathen. What else is there in the document that can be so emphasized as to abrogate this and slip universal salvation into its place? If courts should so interpret language, what would contracts and constitutions be worth?

Historical Continuity. There are those who find a justification for remaining in a church whose creed they have outgrown, in their devotion to the continuity of history. They love the old church as an institution, and though they do not believe its doctrines, they cannot bear to break with it or cripple its life. Its creed is only incidental; and it is better to contribute to its general life, and apparently sanction the creed, than to imperil the institution by dissent. This common argument brings into prominence one of the grave evils inherent in the creed system, which can only be abolished, not by ignoring one's ordination vow or disguising one's real belief, but by going to the root of the matter and changing the constitution of the church. The church need not, and ought not, to have tied itself to dogmas and involved itself in these misfortunes.

My reply is briefly this: (1) It is better for every interest at stake, especially for the institution itself, to be loyal, first of all, to the truth. When the truth is sacrificed, all is lost; institutions can adjust themselves to the truth. (2) The preservation of personal integrity is infinitely more precious than the promotion of historical continuity. (3) Historical continuity does not lie in insincere conformity so much as in outspoken progress. Its apostles were not the tories, but the patriots under Washington; not the friends of Erasmus, but the followers of Luther; not Douglas, who tried to compromise,

but Lincoln, who demanded instant obedience to truth and justice. If the creed is so unimportant that it may be privately ignored, this great fact about it is important enough to be clearly published. And we must always remember that our rule of conduct must be, not the apparent prosperity of an institution, but the good of humanity.

What is Intolerable? I wish to be tolerant toward every form of earnest and manly religious belief. Imperfect creeds we must appreciate and honor. But I am intolerant toward insincerity of every degree and under all disguises. Violation of ordination vows, the constant use of old phrases when their familiar meaning has been repudiated, teaching "new theology" under the flag of the old theology, neglect to make one's ecclesiastical position conform to one's real convictions, continuance in a church when essential elements of its creed have been rejected, — these are things that ought not to be tolerated. This insincerity is the poison that destroys all moral and spiritual life. It is not necessary that we have similar beliefs, but it is necessary that we have honest beliefs honorably espoused. I plead for co-operation among all religious bodies, but neither indifference nor insincerity is the pathway to that goal. I rejoice in religious progress, but only in a progress that is open, manly, ethically consistent.

Progress with Honor. A prominent layman in a large church recently said to me: "I propose to remain in the Presbyterian Church and keep the old fogies from running things; and I can do more for religious progress in this way than by leaving the church, though many things in the creed I do not believe." But do not those who really believe the Confession alone have the right to manage a Presbyterian church? You may keep the "old

fogies" from running the church, but can you run on the Lord's errands while pretending to believe what you do not? Are you not a poor exponent of progress in religion, while subscribing one doctrine and preaching another in the Sunday-school? The martyrs, who made the Christian Church possible, were not men who went decorously to heathen temples while believing in Jesus. The Puritans, who won great victories for freedom and humanity, were not men who tried to abolish popish vestments by going meekly with those who wore them. Darwin did not establish the theory of evolution by holding aloft the banner of Cuvier.

It is not a step forward but downward to march under the flag of Scriptural infallibility while rejecting the Bible as final authority. While our sign is Calvinism, let us keep to its wares; when we go out of that business, let us take down the sign! But it may be asked: Why not allow progress in the Presbyterian Church and permit its preachers to teach what they wish? To which I reply: Well and good, when Presbyterians so decide. But while the institution remains as now organized, claiming a final and infallible faith, it is neither loyal to it nor helpful to the world to confuse the issue and pretend that it allows perfect liberty or that its old symbols adequately describe new truths. Let those who desire progress in religion first of all commit themselves openly to the law of progress by renouncing allegiance to textual and creedal bonds.

Remember Heartaches. I do not wish to seem uncharitable or self-righteous; but with all the vehemence of my moral nature I protest against claims to liberty which are not based on fact, and against practices which obscure the points at issue, blunting moral sensibilities and producing heartaches. I remember the painful confusion of

the child who asked, "Papa, if you do not believe in hell, why do you send me to a Sunday-school where belief in hell is taught?" And in behalf of such sorrowing children, sure to be driven in this way from all religion, I enter my protest. I remember the young man whose heart had been wounded by the minister who, in private, confessed his disbelief in dogmas which he required that young man to profess in public on joining the church. In behalf of these outraged souls, demoralized by such duplicity at the altar of religion, I cry aloud in denunciation. I remember the mental and moral confusion and distress of the merchant who, when elected an elder, and asked to sign the Confession and pledge himself to dogmas that he had never believed and had never heard from the pulpit, felt the sting of hypocrisy, and realized that for years he had been, in the eyes of the community, an advocate of a creed that he did not approve. And in behalf of these distressed people, thus alienated from piety, I lift up my voice for absolute sincerity.

Sincerity, then Progress. These are the sublime truths that I learned from my revered teachers, — from Carlyle, in "Sartor Resartus;" from Martineau, in "Endeavors after a Christian Life;" from Emerson, in his "Essays;" and from Morley, in "Compromise," — the latter a noble book with a much-needed tonic for these days, when so many religious teachers play fast and loose with theological phrases until in our hot indignation we fly for relief to the denunciations hurled by Jesus at hypocrites. The man who puts a mask on both the old creed and his new conviction to make them look alike, disguising and dishonoring both, and purchasing progress at the expense of frankness and veracity, — he poisons life at its very fountain head. The minister who uses phrases in observing the rites of his church that he has to explain

away in his next sermon, commits spiritual suicide. If we have a new truth, let us clothe it in language that is clear and unambiguous. Let us not disguise God's fresh revelation to us by dressing it in the cast-off rags of an erroneous and discredited supernaturalism. We shall do well *not* to follow the advice of a popular preacher who claims that it is proper to use old phrases in a radically new sense, *provided* our hearers agree with us! But why run the risk of giving this uncertain sound? Why confuse and mislead by toying thus with ancient symbols? Let us be done with all duplicity at the altar of religion, that we may more easily enforce the moral law in the world at large. Let us enthrone sincerity in the church, that the victories for the higher life may everywhere and always be more easily and speedily won.

[No. 111]

THE NEW INSPIRATION OF RELIGION.

BY

REV. THOMAS R. SLICER.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE NEW INSPIRATION OF RELIGION.

"For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his eternal power and Divinity."

It is possible, though somewhat difficult, to imagine man without religion. But given any form of religion, ranging from the fetish worship of primitive people to the open-souled reception of the last returns from the universe, it is impossible to imagine a religion without inspiration. Even ethics must have passion, else it is a mere outline of behavior, and religion must have inspiration, else it is a mere body of divinity; and a body without inspiration is a corpse.

We have no difficulty in supposing that there have been inspired religions in the past; but the tendency in religion is to stereotyped forms, and that which is stereotyped is not inspired. It lacks the essential power of life and motion. The movable type may be rearranged in infinite variety; the stereotyped plate must be subjected to fire before it can be broken up. The mistake is often made in modern thought that we attribute inspiration to the past in the exact ratio of its remoteness; and we find it easy to believe in Saints, provided they are two thousand years old. But this claim for inspiration in the past justifies itself in the

fact that religion has produced in the past both prophets and scriptures. This is in all time the test of religion: *does it breed prophets and does it make scripture.* If it breeds no prophets, it is sterile. If it makes no scriptures, then it has ceased to have the living word spoken to it; because if to any human soul a living word be spoken that is deep enough in its resources and keen enough in its appeal, it must eventually make a scripture, a holy writing; it cannot die. We admit this freely of the past. We name the prophets. We have no difficulty in believing in Isaiah and Zachariah and Ezekiel and Jeremiah and all the rest. We have no difficulty, in assuming that not only has God spoken to the Hebrew; but that he has spoken to the Greek, the Hindoo, the Persian, and the Mohammedan, is more difficult, except to him who has faith in the universality of religion. Our prophets must be gray men, and our structure must be venerable with age.

Now, the purpose of that statement is not to deny the fact. The fact is manifest. There have been prophets and there have been scriptures; the prophet speaks still out of the past, and the Scripture remains. But the inquiry for us is to know what constitutes this inspiration which gave prophets and scriptures to the past.

First, a conviction of reality. These men of the past had power to deal with things that were "not seen," as though they were still within experience. They spoke the vision of the inner eye; they declared that the eye which sees is not the eye of the Seer; but that the inner eye is fixed upon that which is more evident to it than any demonstration to sight. It was such a vision as when Job declared that the new revelation of God to the sufferer led him to say, "I have heard

of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth Thee, therefore do I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

It is this sense of the reality of the unseen — this power of the invisible — which appears in that fine statement of the Epistle to the Hebrews with respect to Moses, that "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." This is the meaning of the text "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that do appear." There is to the prophet's eye an appearance that does not appear to the common man; as in the definition of Martineau, "The prophet is the man who has discovered to what heights of divinity he must look up, and upon what adamantine manhood he must take his stand." All this is freely admitted for the past. The sense of reality made the prophet the real man. But he had more than this sense of reality; the inspiration of religion in the past which bred prophets and made scriptures is due to the fact that BETWEEN THIS REALITY AND HIMSELF THIS INSPIRED MAN COULD ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP. He was not simply a looker-on at realities. They did not pass in parade before his eye. He was not simply the observer of a procession of the divine manifestations. He established divine relationships. He might well use the common phrase, "All this I saw, and part of it I was." So that his history was not simply his story of that which had appeared to him or was in plain sight, but that which also he felt, and the inner life arrayed itself and proceeded to constitute a part of the picture that he himself had seen.

But there is still another peculiarity that must test the ancient inspiration of religion. There was in the religion of the past, which, in some sort, still survives,

A POWER OF ABANDON TO THESE REALITIES that were perceived and under these conditions were established. I have said there was a sense of reality. That with this reality there were set up relations just exactly as real as the relation of lungs to atmosphere, or eye to light, or ear to sound. The whole relationship of the man to his environment, of function to its field of exercise, was in the prophet a sense of God. Not only was this true, but there was *an abandon — a letting one's self go* — to the full currents of inspiration of religion.

Now the question arises whether these conditions remain, and if they remain, whether they are less or more. For religion that is catalogued, labelled and shelved may be interesting as a part of the museum of human history, but is no longer potent as a part of the dynamic of personal life. If Religion has not new inspiration, it will not breed prophets; it will not make scriptures. My claim is that the new inspiration of religion produces profounder results, both in prophet and in scripture, as tested by the sense of reality, — the relationship established between the soul and the Real, and the abandon of the soul to the Reality. That is the proposition for which Unitarians make the claim of the present inspiration of religion.

Revelation is the coming of the present world into the range of the observer; its meaning and inspiration are tested by the effect upon him.

What is the test for the inspiration of these books of Hebrew religion? All the documents are anonymous, therefore you could not prove the writing. The documents are not equally valuable, because they are the product of a thousand years of growing literature. What is the proof, then, of their inspiration? The proof does not lie in your discovery of the inspiration

of the writer. It lies in your discovery of *the inspiration of the reader.* That which finds me, that which inspires me, is inspired for me; there may be equal inspiration in two documents, but there may be unequal susceptibility in the reader of the documents. For instance, many a man is inspired by Milton to whom Browning says nothing, and yet Milton and Browning were both the mouthpieces of God. The inspiration is to be found in the reader. "THAT IS INSPIRED WHICH INSPIRES." You see we get now the appeal to the individual as he stands fronting his universe, though the universe is not the same to every observer.

Allow me to illustrate that for a moment. The sidereal universe has widened away. We had at one time a Deity enthroned somewhere outside the world in a kind of oriental sovereignty and the world deployed its forces under his eye. Now there is nowhere for God to be enthroned because He is everywhere; and the *where* is lost in the *everywhere;* just as your sense of measures might be dropped into the sea of thought and you no longer spoke of inches, or of a yard, or fathoms and miles, but you spoke of depth and distance in gasps of the breath and in pulsations of the heart and in fine admirations of the soul. You see, the immensity of that which you sought to measure has simply defied measurement, but has become more real therefore. The universe always *is.* This Deity who was enthroned outside the world, and administered it with the arbitrary petulance of an oriental sovereign, has lost his meaning to the modern man. So meagre was our conception of God and His world that were it possible for an instant to re-establish His throne, a million worlds would cast their glory on His back. The Milky Way, which was a haze to the eyes a hundred years ago, pal-

pitates with worlds to-day. Have they come into being since then? They have been coming into view by better instruments for a hundred years. "One day is with God as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." That hundred years was the mere flicker of an eye; the mere momentary lifting of a thought in comparison to the eternities in which they have been coming into being. What has happened then? We have gained new instruments of observation. That is all. There was no lens strong enough to do more than bring the near planets nearer, a hundred years ago. Now, the great lenses, absolutely achromatic, through which the heavens are looked upon by the observer, have not created the heavens. They have simply revealed what has always been there. We have been lifted to them by better powers of observation. In the observatory of a great university they were photographing the stars; they discovered, as they thought, upon the plate after its exposure through the night, blurs and defects; they set again in its place the delicate plate for exposure through the night; there were the same blurs and defects upon the photographic plate, for which no one could account. What had happened? That which the eye could not see, even through the telescope, had looked into the telescope and had photographed itself upon the plate; it was worlds in-the-making which had registered themselves there as the revelation of the Eternal. The observer had caught the universe at work. One is reminded of the saying of Jesus, "My Father worketh up to this point and I work."

From the side of scientific thought the claim is made that life is enlarged, that experience is enriched, and as a result, therefore, revelation should be enhanced and inspiration deepened. Whatever enlarges experience

must *add new revelation. Whatever enriches experience must deepen our inspiration.*

What is the fact with respect to the scientific study of the world as to its effect upon religion? This history of thought in this respect has passed through three periods. In that supposed antagonism which existed between theology and scientific statement, the first period was marked by the question, How can we reconcile *what we hear* from science with *what we know* of religion? We can all remember the time when a nice adjustment was sought for the new fact to the old form; when we were trying to get a new specimen under the old catalogue; when we were trying to arrange not only the new working theory in science, but the new scientific fact, under some title which would account for it, and the constant question was, How can we reconcile what we hear from science with what we know of religion? Then there came the second period, in which the question was, How can we reconcile *what we have been taught* in religion with *what we know* in science? That shifted the emphasis, and it was no longer an equation on the old terms. Now, at last, we stand in the midst of that period when every devout and earnest soul must ask himself the question, *How can we pay the debt which religion owes to science?* Dismiss from your minds for all time the idea that you can pay it by giving up religion. That no scientific mind demands, and the scientific facts do not require. You cannot pay a debt by repudiating it. That is neither good economics nor good sense. What is the method which science has forced upon religion? It has reduced faith to its necessary and lowest terms. Man's universe, as I have said to you, has been immensely extended in time and space, in variety and in interest.

What has been the result? That in modern life we deal with things at first hand, and the claim upon religion is that it also shall be no longer quoted, but experienced. The Pharisee and the Scribe must be still, while the common man tells what he sees and feels. This is the heightening of the religious sense in man. We no longer quote, saying, "Rabbi (this or that) has said such a word in the past." No. We deal by scientific method with things at first hand, which introduces us to realities, establishes relations and enlarges experience. Religion will pay its debt to science when it realizes that this must be its method also.

There appears at once a certain peril to the timid. I have already intimated that the greater universe requires the greater God. If you will have your own idol, then the probability is that he will look like a pigmy on the immense pedestal which the world's thought has provided for him. He used to be "magnified and non-natural," now he will appear puny and unnatural. A pedestal for the enthroned divinity has been infinitely extended and enlarged, and to put your little cabinet God, who would interfere on demand with the order of nature with miracle for individual benefit, who had a kind of a sheriff-administration of the world for small offences, who had a special providence which was special for the saints and not for the atom as now it is, — to reconstitute your worship on the old terms before that shrine is to find your deity shrivelled under the light of modern thought and appear as a mere speck in a universe where once he loomed great and impressive. The timid soul realizes that the greater universe has changed all the conceptions concerning God, and the anthropomorphic deity, "the man-fashioned and non-natural" being, has disappeared out of the universe.

Another peril appears on the side of a threatened materialism which accounts for nothing, and we confuse the definitions of the new thought with the suspicion that there are no realities to correspond to them. How this has been carried forward appears in this simple statement from Dr. Martineau. He is speaking of this enlarged universe, of this supposed conflict between Religion and Science. He says:

"When it appeared that no commencement could be found, that cosmical time goes back through all that had been called eternity; that for the prefix of an almighty fiat no vacancy could be shown, the natural forces seemed to have secured the system of things all to themselves and to leave no room for their first appearance in succession to an earlier power. Faith, terrified at the prospect, vowed for a while to search somewhere for the crisis of their birth; and while inexorable discovery penetrated the past, taking the centuries at a stride, Faith kept beside upon the wing, watching with anxious eye for the terminal edge which looked into the deep of God; till at last, weary and drooping, she could sustain the flight no more, and to escape falling into the fathomless darkness, took refuge in the bosom of her guide, not to be repelled or crushed, as she had feared, but to be cherished and revived."

This is the so-called reconciliation of Religion and Science, which is simply the discovery that God has not been banished by modern thought, and that the soul still lives and listens, and that the universe is vocal with the revelation of God's will.

Now, I call your attention, as briefly as I may, to the results of this new inspiration.

What has come of this new view of the universe? Of course, there are two or three things which happened

that one must deplore, but they have not happened as logical results. They have happened as earthquakes happen, where a city is engulfed because the planet is cooling; they have happened as when volcanoes kill because men have built their houses on the green slopes where a furnace glows beneath. The new thought of the universe has produced two results which we must deplore, but which I hold are unnecessary. The first is that men have supposed that the idea of cause, since it is no longer called Jehovah or by some tribal name, has passed out of the order of things. Whereas, what has happened to all thinking minds is this, that the idea of cause has taken its place alongside the idea of space and time as one of the data of our thinking, and we can no more think of the "uncaused" than we can think of that which is out of time and out of space. And so far from selecting now your deity for worship, you are haunted by a deity who will not be dismissed. God is upon every thinking man's track; and *atheism is impossible.* That is the first intellectual result. There are people who say they have given up God. They had no God. Having seen their idol taken away, they are in the position of Laban, who pursued after his daughter and said, "Take her, Jacob! Take my daughter to thine own land, but under the furniture of the camels there are my household gods, and those I will take back with me to my tent." That is the attitude of the irreligious man who supposed himself to be religious. Having had his deity conveyed away, he will part with every other consideration to get his idol back.

Another thing has happened which we must deplore, but which is not inevitable. When the repressive influences of the older forms of religion were taken off, the invertebrate creature dropped into a jelly mass

because it had been sustained only from the outside. You cannot produce a spinal column by external protection, and you cannot produce regeneration by external pressure, and you cannot make one of nature's creatures vertebrate by putting it into stays. When Hell was extinguished in the tears of the divine compassion, when the Day of Judgment ceased to be a spectacular expectation and became a present experience; when the Atonement failed to make men one with God, because God seemed to be no longer wrathful, but always forgiving; when all these repressive methods disappeared, the natural instincts came to the front, and I have no doubt that the charge is perfectly true that some men have "gone to the bad" because they have lost the old securities of religion. There are such people. But what happened when that other natural condition asserted itself? "They went to the bad" — they went "to their own place." They never were good. They simply were like hounds in leash, whose sense for the prey was always with them, restrained only by the collar and untamed in desire. When men, under the new aspects of religion, go into evil because they have lost their religion, it is because they simply have discovered themselves as deformed with basilar instincts; the brute element is waiting for its liberation. That is no fault of the newer time. It is the testimony to the fact that many of us are not yet human.

Now against this unlovely aspect set the real fact. What is the new inspiration for religion? It is a call to *communion with God.* I am "doomed to be saved;" I cannot escape God any longer. We read now with a meaning more intense and beautiful than ever before that splendid One Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm:

"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither

shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there. If I make my bed in the under world, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me; for the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day."

The splendid reality of the soul's experience is found in a more intimate communion and deeper sense of God. There are men to-day, called scientific, who, in the agony of their earnestness, will not assume any religious name, who are as religious as Ezekiel was in his effort to make Jerusalem a place of righteousness, or Jeremiah in his plaint over the sins of the people. They have an utter sincerity, cardinal virtue, passion for righteousness, ethical earnestness, willingness to have the universe on its own terms, and have it no other way. If that be not the test of a deeper sense of God, I do not know what its symptoms are. And instead of coming to God as in the old way, calling — calling across the gulf to where He may be — He finds me where I am; and when I am still, the footfall which I hear may be His step. I cannot escape Him. It is not simply now that "underneath are the everlasting arms," but we are shut in with God, and this deeper communion and keener sense of the Eternal is the contribution of the new time to the utterly sincere soul.

The new inspiration of religion has made this contribution also: It has made a distinct contribution to the *courage of life.* If religion does not add zest to life, then it fails, so far. It is not simply something to comfort me when I am in trouble. That were an imported influence; that were an imparted presence, but

since religion is nature at her highest and human nature at its best; since religion is a passionate devotion to the will of God, and finds that Will written on every page of the Book of Life, it is not something that is to comfort me when I am at my lowest; it is something to hearten me when I am at my busiest. It has added zest to life. Religion is not a raft shoved out to a sinking man, but it is the clothing of the mind; it is the blood which goes through the veins; it is the heart of courage that is beneath all other things; it is the zest of every day's experience. Now, this contribution is made by the modern thought of God and life as an inspiration to religion; its courage is heightened; you are no longer afraid; God is no longer propitiated, not because it is impossible but because it is unnecessary; God is no longer feared; not because He is turned towards us, but because we have discovered that He had never turned away; and the splendid courage of modern thought concerning God is bedded and embosomed in the thought that this universe which is Himself — or His garment, if you will — flames with that Inner Life which we have discovered to be the Light of God. And so the man who believes on the terms of modern Thought in God says there is nothing in God's world to be afraid of. Does he look out at the future? His utterance then is such a word as Emerson's, "All that I have seen of God's work in the world leads me to trust for that I have not seen; and whatever it is that the Divine Providence has in reserve for us, it must be something large and in the grand style of His work." Thus there is a distinct heightening of the courage of the human soul under the new inspiration of religion.

And, finally, we get a *new interpretation of faith.* Faith used to be thought of as something independent

of or exceeding the ordinary reasoning of life. This is not faith, but credulity; after the manner of Tertullian in the third century, saying "I believe it because it is impossible." Rather take that better word of the same Tertullian, and it is more native to our present thought — "The soul divines what is divine." It was in one of his better moments that he said this. We get now a new definition of faith, and it is a distinct advance in the inspiration of religion. Faith is not the acceptance any longer of the unproved and unprovable on the testimony of somebody in whom I believe. Religion is no longer supported upon two great pillars, miracle and prophecy. The miracle may occur, but if it occurred every day of the week, it would not only cease to be a miracle, but it would still be external to the soul; and no bridge can be built from any spiritual experience to any physical wonder; and the old, blind instinct of common sense, like another Samson, has gone into this idolatrous structure of religion, sustained upon these two pillars of miracle and prophecy, and flinging its arms about the supports has dragged them from their foundation. Did religion perish when these supporting pillars fell? No. It was not really dependent upon these supposed supports. It was sustained by other guaranties of strength in the human soul itself. It was bedded in deeper foundations, and the pillars that were supposed to hold the canopy above the worshipping soul proved to be the temporary devices of human fancy. That is all. They were the ornament of the age that produced them, just as much as an arch or a turret may be. So that faith is no longer the statement of the unproved and unprovable upon somebody's word in whom we believe. *Faith is the loyalty of the soul.* I would not have the world other than it is, in all

its natural forces; but I would make it other than it is in its social discredit and reproach; the faithful man to-day, the man of faith, accepts God's work as perfect, and matches human work to that ideal; the loyal soul is the faithful soul. The faithful soul would not have the universe jarred out of its course because he happens to be in the path of danger. He accepts the terms it sets for him; he accepts his life upon the terms he has discovered in the normal condition of the world, and instead of putting faith in place of reason, he demonstrates that faith is twin with reason.

For the first time in the history of the world religion seems really native to man. God is not sought any longer. He is the next of kin and lives in thy house. He is not importuned any longer, for "He knoweth what things you need before you ask Him." He is not atoned-to any longer, for His unvarying compassions are the breath of our life. He does not interfere any longer; He asks us simply to work to His plan; and interference is excluded in perfect life. He does not ask us to believe that which discredits our intelligence; for the proof of our faith is the rise of our intelligence to His thought. He does not threaten us with some remote Day of Judgment, but sets us shivering in the presence of our neglected ideal. He does not harry us with some exaction which we cannot abide, but He haunts us with the imperative ideal of beauty and of life. He does not reward us by a heaven to which we must travel; our heaven descends and is now. He does not offer us a refuge from Himself, but a home in Himself. And the brotherhood of the race might raise this day a song of praise unto the Eternal because it has discovered "the Divinity of man and the Humanity of God."

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[No. 112.]

BAPTISM

AND

THE LORD'S SUPPER

AS INTERPRETED AND OBSERVED BY UNITARIANS.

BY

REV. AUGUSTUS P. RECCORD.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

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The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

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In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

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(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christanity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER AS INTERPRETED AND OBSERVED BY UNITARIANS.

For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body. — 1 Cor. xii. 13.
This do in remembrance of me. — Luke xxii. 19.

One of the first questions which confronted the early Church was as to how candidates were to be admitted to the Christian circle. If the faith and conscience of new disciples were to be publicly committed to the religion of Jesus, there must be some outward act or acts which they must perform.

In considering this question, Dr. Martineau states that "the ministry of Jesus himself suggested what these acts should be; for it had opened with the baptism and closed with the last supper; the one followed by the descent of the Spirit, the other by the sacrifice of himself. Let these be the model for every disciple's self-dedication, the beginning and completion of his union with Christ. Does he yearn for the Holy Spirit? Let him be baptized. Does he long to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and share in the immortality of Christ? Let him frequent the Lord's Supper, and there he will appropriate the benefits of the cross, and be fed on the manna of eternal life."

It is significant, as showing the pendulum-like swing of human thought and observance, that the Protestant world has preserved as its only sacraments these two of baptism and communion. It is doubly significant that

it is gradually returning to the original meaning and purpose of these observances as suggested by our texts; one as a symbol of that baptism of the Spirit which betokens membership in the Christian community, the other as a service of remembrance and consecration.

There are three distinct attitudes toward the so-called "sacraments" which must be recognized as having much to do with their interpretation and observance. The Catholic Church regards them as means of grace. Hence it has exaggerated the element of mystery and magic, while at the same time it has multiplied their number. To the two which can claim a New Testament origin, it has added five others, which have little or no Scriptural basis, — confirmation, penance or absolution, extreme unction, holy orders, and matrimony. Protestants have rejected these later additions and regard the two remaining — baptism and communion — as having no sacramental efficacy. They are merely occasions for the special manifestation of divine grace. Unitarians regard them as observances hallowed by tradition, made sacred by centuries of Christian usage, and deserving to be perpetuated because of their beautiful symbolism. To us they are respectively services of dedication and reconsecration. As such they are worthy of closer study and a truer understanding of their origin, history, and significance.

It is difficult to ascertain whether baptism was a Jewish custom before the time of Jesus or not. The Old Testament contains no reference to it, and in the New Testament we meet it for the first time in the ministry of John the Baptist. But if it was not one of the forms of Jewish purification, it was in entire harmony with its spirit. Among the Jews, as among many oriental people, the exigencies of a warm climate made cleanliness of paramount importance as a precaution against

disease and ill health. Hence the frequent washings and bathings and ablutions. Cleanliness was not merely "next to godliness," as with Wesley; it was a component part of godliness, and had an important place in their religious observances. What could be more natural than that John should have seized upon this purity of body, with which the people were all familiar, as a fitting symbol of that purity of life which he made a prerequisite to the coming of God's kingdom? He baptized with water, but it was only a symbol of that baptism of the Spirit which was to result in newness of life. "Wash you, make you clean," has been the cry of the moral reformer from that day to this. As Dean Stanley truly states, "John proclaimed the one indispensable condition of all spiritual religion, that the regeneration of the human spirit was to be accomplished, not by ceremonies or opinions, not by succession or descent, but by moral uprightness."

Not till the day of Pentecost was baptism regarded as a distinctively Christian rite. Although Jesus was baptized by John, he makes little mention of it, and never requires it of his disciples. He sends forth the Twelve without including it in the instructions given to them. The one passage which commands the eleven disciples to go forth and baptize all nations "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" betrays its later origin by using the language of the next century. Certainly those who maintain that this is a genuine command of the Master and that no baptism is valid without this Trinitarian formula, must be prepared to accept the logical conclusion of their premise, — namely, that few if any of the Apostolic baptismal services were valid. If there is any one thing of which we are sure, it is that it was the custom upon such occasions to baptize the new disciple "into the name of the Lord Jesus."

In like manner if Jesus had enjoined it we can hardly imagine St. Paul treating it with such supreme indifference as he displays. He thanks God that he baptized only a few, whose names even he cannot remember accurately, and then adds, "for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

Obviously, then, the observance of baptism as a Christian rite, a means of admission into the Christian fellowship, had its origin in Peter's action upon the day of Pentecost, calling upon the people to repent and be baptized "unto the remission of sins." Its development from this simple beginning into the complicated dogma of a later day is a matter of history. The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," dating from the second century, forbade any to partake of the Lord's Supper "but those baptized into the name of the Lord." The third century assigned it to special seasons, — Easter or Pentecost. One by one the various ceremonial appendages were added: the eastward posture, anointing with oil, consecration of the water, laying aside of old garments, laying on of hands, clothing the candidate with white vestments, burning tapers, the kiss of peace, milk, honey, and salt, and finally the administration of the first communion.

With this change of form there came a change of significance. With the Baptist it symbolized repentance and purification from sin. With St. Paul it was a "death of the believer with Christ unto the flesh, and a resurrection with him unto the new life in the spirit." In the early Church it combined both of these elements and added a third: it stood for physical, moral, and spiritual cleanliness; it symbolized the death of the old self and the rebirth of the new; and it demanded as a prerequisite a profession of faith in Christ and a determination to walk in his steps.

The next century made it indispensable to salvation. It was the supreme condition of entrance into the Church and participation in the communion. Later, all sorts of magical notions began to collect about it. Instead of a symbol, it became a means of grace. Some thought the water was transformed into the blood of Christ; others that it possessed the miraculous power to wipe all sins away. "The boy Athanasius, throwing water in jest over his playmate on the sea-shore, performed, as it was believed, a valid baptism; the apostles in the spray of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the penitent thief in the water that rushed from the wound of the Crucified, were imagined to have received the baptism which had else been withheld from them." Obviously, the later in life one was baptized, the more the sins that would be washed away. Hence it became the custom to defer baptism, — often, as in the case of the Emperor Constantine, until just before death, in order that the sins of a whole life might be removed.

Disputes naturally arose as to the precise effect of the baptismal service. Calvin denied its supernatural efficacy, and maintained that it was merely the sign of a salvation which was already complete. Only the election of God could save. The baptism of the non-elect was void. The anti-Calvinists asserted that regeneration was effected through baptism, and hence every baptized person was regenerate.

Another controversy arose concerning infant baptism. We have no way of determining the usage of the apostolic Church, but by the end of the second century it was a common practice. Baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation, and hence unbaptized infants were shut out from the Kingdom of God. This harsh doctrine suffered the fate of all doctrines which are opposed to the most fundamental humanitarian instincts. First, it was so

modified as to admit unbaptized infants to a sort of half-way heaven, where they would be free from torment, but deprived of the highest blessings. Later, even this restriction was abandoned, and the gates of heaven were thrown open wide to these little ones, whose "angels do always behold the face of the Father."

To-day the baptismal service is being gradually restored to the simplicity and purity of its original meaning and significance. One by one the accretions of ages have been stripped off. As less stress is laid upon the water, it matters little whether one is sprinkled or immersed. As it loses its magical efficacy, the tendency is to push it forward toward the beginning of life rather than postpone it until the end. Thus, whereas formerly adult baptism was the rule and infant baptism the exception, to-day infant baptism is the rule and adult baptism, save among the Baptists, is rare.

Adult baptism is granted by some churches upon the relation of personal experience and confession of faith; by others upon assent to catechism or creed. Unitarians grant it to all who accept the religion of Jesus and desire to follow in his steps. They believe with Robertson that "all men are children of God by right, but not in fact until they recognize their sonship, believe in it and live it." Of this recognition, baptism is simply the visible declaration, saying, "Now remember you are a child of God; from henceforth live as such."

The baptism of children, or "christening," as it is so often called, has a double significance. First of all, it is a dedication of their little souls to God. Just as Mary went up at the appointed time and presented the infant Jesus in the temple; just as, in later years, mothers brought their little ones to him that he might bless them; so to-day we bring our little ones into the temple of God and consecrate them to his service. As

we pray for God's holy spirit to descend upon them, even as it is said to have descended so many years ago, we venture the hope that this childlike purity, of which the water is but the emblem, may never be tarnished, and that the childlike unfolding may be symmetrical and complete.

"I think, when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How he called little children as lambs to his fold,
I should like to have been with him then.
I wish that his hands had been placed on my head,
That his arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen his kind look when he said,
'Let the little ones come unto me.'"

But this is longing for the impossible. And yet, although the children may not feel his hand upon their brows, nor feel his arms around them, nor hear his voice, yet with our help they may be so reared that the Christ-spirit will dwell within them, that his voice will be heard whispering to them, and that together with him they will feel that they are ever supported and sustained by the Everlasting Arms.

This suggests the second significance. It is not only a dedication of these little ones, but of their parents and elders as well. As we feel how great is childhood's innocence and purity, how perfect its love and trust, we may be pardoned if for the moment we are led to regard them as messengers of God sent forth to rebuke the world for its selfishness and hypocrisy, and to announce that the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither can men take it by force, but it yields only to the simplicity and purity and faith of the little child. We appreciate at length those beautiful words of Faber, —

"Thy home is with the humble, Lord!
The simplest are the best.
Thy lodging is in childlike hearts,
Thou makest there Thy rest."

And so with this vision of childlike purity and holiness before our eyes, we dedicate ourselves to the bringing in of that Heavenly Kingdom which will be ushered in only as we too become as little children.

Our consideration of the baptismal service has prepared us in a way for a consideration of the Lord's Supper. It is with a feeling of surprise that we read the simple words with which Jesus enjoined its observance upon his disciples, — "This do in remembrance of me." It seems hardly possible that so simple a rite, and one so clear in its significance, could ever have been the starting-point of those metaphysical speculations which sorely puzzled the minds of the mediæval theologians. At first we cannot understand how any sane mind could give to this simple service of commemoration the mystical significance of the later Eucharistic observance. Certainly the accounts of the "Last Supper" in the "large upper room" contain no hint of its sacramental nature, no suggestion that it was to become an ecclesiastical institution, and no provision for its extension beyond the limits of those who were present. Its central thought was "remembrance of Jesus." It was the natural wish of Jesus, as he observed the passover with his disciples for the last time, that they should not forget him, that they should remember him at their passover meal, and if possible feel the power of his spiritual presence. It was almost inevitable that after his death they should remember this last request, and that their simple meal should become the "Lord's Supper," and commemorate the last occasion upon which they had broken bread with their acknowledged Lord and Master. Thus it became a bond of union among believers, and constituted the crowning act of the religious life.

For the mediæval theologian, however, this was not

enough. Instead of the simple service, when the heathen members of the congregation were dismissed and the Christian believers remained and communed together, there was substituted a mystical ceremony from which, as we have seen, all who were not baptized were excluded. Instead of a bond of union, it became a test of exclusion. The glorified Christ was represented as dwelling bodily in the elements. The bread and wine became his actual flesh and blood. Later, this doctrine of "consubstantiation," as it was called, was still more refined, and we have the theory of "transubstantiation," the doctrine that Christ is not actually present in the elements, but that the bread and wine are changed into his flesh and blood and received by all who partake, irrespective of the character of the priest or of the belief of the recipient.

This marked the extreme swing of the pendulum. Since the Reformation, the course of development has been slowly retraced. Luther affirmed the real presence of Christ in the elements, who was received by all communicants, worthy and unworthy alike. Calvin maintained only a spiritual presence of Christ, who was received only by true believers. Orthodox Protestants leaned toward this position, regarding the communion as merely an occasion when Christ manifests himself with special power; while Unitarians returned to the purely commemorative use of the early Church.

Naturally the pendulum then began to swing toward the opposite extreme. Men and women of the purest motives and most exemplary character began to entertain conscientious scruples against its observance. They could not, at first, free it from its former associations, its implication of the supernatural, or its apparent expression of an actual state of perfection rather than of the hope of future righteousness. Ralph Waldo Emerson

resigned his pulpit rather than continue the administration of a sacrament in which he had neither belief nor interest, while others administered it with many misgivings. Such an extreme position, however, could not be final. As the old-time associations faded away, and the memory of mediæval abuses became more faint, it was seen that in this simple service there was a most precious means of spiritual power and strength.

The life of the late O. B. Frothingham furnishes a most valuable illustration of the change which has taken place in liberal thought. During the later years of his ministry he abandoned its observance, not because of lack of personal interest, as with Emerson, but because he regarded it as dividing those who ought to be united, as encouraging a form of self-righteousness, and as implying a grace that did not exist. Hence he termed it a "mere formality, without an excuse for being."

After such words, expressing his belief of some forty years ago, it is instructive to find him, a few years before his death, expressing his reverence for the observance in the highest terms. "It is no longer a ceremony or a tradition," he writes, "but a means of spiritual cultivation. It stands for fellowship and aspiration, not for a communion of saints, but of all those who desire to share the saintly mind, of all who aim at perfection. . . . The idea of spiritual communion is a grand one. It is universal; it is human in the best sense. True, the ceremony contains no thought or sentiment which is not expressed in the sermon or the prayer, but it puts these in poetic form; it addresses them directly to the imagination, it associates them with the holier souls in their holiest hours, and brings people face to face with their better selves in the tenderest and most touching manner, teaching charity, love, endeavor after the religious life. . . . A symbol often goes further than an argument, and a

symbol so ancient and so consecrated ought to be preserved."

From this change in the attitude of the great radical, we can gather the straws which reveal to us the tendency of the liberal thought of to-day. According to Renan, "the work of the twentieth century will consist in taking out of the waste-basket a multitude of excellent ideas which the nineteenth century has needlessly cast into it." This work has already begun. One by one the discarded ceremonies and usages of the Christian Church are being gathered up, divorced from their mystical associations, given new, or rather older, interpretations, and restored to a place of honor among our ecclesiastical institutions. When we meet together for the purpose of commemorating the last supper of Jesus and the disciples, we do not seek to draw an imaginary line between sinner and saint, nor do we expect any miraculous transformation either of the elements of the supper or of our own lives. We meet together because we wish to heed the injunction of the Master, — "This do in remembrance of me."

First, we remember the Master himself. We turn back in our thought to the scene of that last supper in the upper room, and try to hear again the words of wisdom which he uttered. We can hardly over-estimate the value of such commemoration. The whole world recognizes the need of keeping the memory of other leaders ever fresh and vivid. We have our Washington's day, our Patriots' day, our Memorial day, our Independence day, — all for the purpose of keeping certain men or certain events in everlasting remembrance. If the smouldering fires of patriotism are re-kindled by such red-letter days, is it wrong to assume that the smouldering fires of religious faith may be quickened and fanned into an enduring flame by this periodic commemoration of our Lord's Supper?

Again, it is not only a communion with the Master and with each other, but with all those saintly souls who have tried to follow in his footsteps. It not only goes back by direct historic association to the Founder of Christianity, but it recalls those noble men and women of each successive generation who have proved loyal to the Christ ideal. It is no longer a mere remembrance, but a symbol of human brotherhood, of the communion of God's children of every age and every race. We feel with the poet Whittier, —

> "That all of good the past hath had
> Remains to make our own time glad, —
> Our common, daily life divine,
> And every land a Palestine."

And then, again, we realize that it is not only the remembrance of an historic personage, but of an *ideal;* that it is not only a remembrance of the past, but an expression of hope for the future. Now and then we hear the cry "Back to Jesus," but we realize that his ideal of life and character is still far in advance of the best of us. The rebirth of Christianity will not come through any merely intellectual search for the purpose of learning more about the facts of his life; it will come through the labor and travail of human souls yearning to share the purity of his spirit, the simplicity of his faith, the sanity of his life.

We may not be able to give adequate expression to our feelings of discipleship toward him, but we may at least take part in this commemorative service and thus manifest our admiration for the Christ spirit, and our loyalty to the Christ ideal. And so with this interpretation of the significance of the Lord's Supper; the invitation to it is as broad and inclusive as the spirit of Christianity itself.

"Lo! the feast is spread to-day.
Jesus summons: come away
From the vanity of life,
From the sounds of mirth or strife,
To the feast by Jesus given, —
Come, and taste the Bread of Heaven."

Such are the "sacraments" of the liberal faith. They are a part of our religious inheritance. They suggest the beginning and the end of that brief ministry which gave us a new civilization and a new era. Gratefully received, truthfully interpreted, and reverently administered, they will be to us what they have been to others, a source of spiritual power and inspiration.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

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FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 113]

THE HERITAGE

OF

LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY.

BY

REV. LESLIE W. SPRAGUE.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells, and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

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THE HERITAGE OF LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children of God, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. — Romans viii. 16, 17.

Material inheritances may be mere matters of accident, but every spiritual inheritance must be proved. A child succeeds to his father's name and fortune without any effort or merit of his own. To be "a son of his father," however, he must live up to his father's life; must display the strength of character, of aim and effort, which marked the father from other men. Nor must he be a mere echo of the father; he must live a life of his own, which is yet worthy to be compared with the father's life. There are therefore two births: one into the material accidents of life; the other into life itself, into the purpose, aim, and effort which characterize personal existence.

The child is heir to the father's life when he also lives that life. So all men are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, if so be that they suffer with him. Inheritance from God is somewhat to be won; it knows neither chance nor gratuity, and acknowledges nothing but desert.

The inheritance of Liberal Christianity is mainly a spiritual inheritance. It does not consist, primarily, in organizations, in temples, creeds, or rites; it consists in

the things of the spirit. It is an inheritance which must be proved. Lowell says, —

> "'T is heaven alone that is given away.
> 'T is only God may be had for the asking."

Likewise Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," and "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

It would seem, then, that the greatest things are most easily to be had, are gratuitous bounties, showered by the free hand of Divine benevolence. Yet to ask for heaven, to supplicate for spiritual life, to hunger and thirst for righteousness are the accomplishment of most strenuous effort. No prayer needs to be so persistently offered as that of the disciples, — "Lord, teach us to pray." To be able to ask for heaven is life's greatest attainment.

The inheritance of Liberal Christianity is to be known only to those who have hungered and thirsted for spiritual things. It is not an inheritance to the idle or indifferent; it is not to those who delight to call themselves liberal from no other motive than to affirm that they are not orthodox, who know not the height and depth and glory of that faith which the ages have wrought for those willing to pay the price still due. There are those in every community where the Liberal Church is known who are heard to say that they have no religion, no need for any church, that they do not believe in God, or soul, or immortality, and yet presume to say that they are Unitarians or Universalists. The burden of their misrepresentation weighs heavily upon the forces of the Liberal Church. Such souls, most unhappily, do not know the height and depth and richness of the liberal faith. They have not paid the price of spiritual inheritance.

In order to grasp the significance of the spiritual in-

heritance, it must be perceived that there is also a material part to all inheritance, — a body to contain the soul.

A man joins a political party. He thereby shares a great heritage. That party, under various names and with differing emphasis, has continued through all the changes since government began. And because it is a party, not the whole, it has limitations. About it are arrayed prejudices; in it exist corruptions; the very machinery of its organization prescribes its action and results.

Likewise a church has its forms, its method of government, its articles of faith, the traditions which bind as law cannot; and, on the other hand, a splendid momentum, a time-honored prestige, an accumulation of experience, wisdom, and power.

Measuring his inheritance, the Liberal Christian finds little on the material side. In place of the prestige of an honored past, which other churchmen enjoy, he receives the prophet's part of stones, delivered now more politely, but no less stingingly, than of yore, since they are rendered in the form of mistrust and ostracism. He inherits an organization far from perfect, — formed largely upon lines of churches earlier in existence, and adapted to other work, not to that of the Liberal faith.

But on the material side he receives more than this; for he receives as an inheritance from the past religious consciousness a sacred literature — the Bible. He inherits a Sabbath, — a day set apart long ages since for rest to the body and refreshment to the soul. He inherits the custom and the social sanction of public worship, without which his religious inspirations would languish and his spiritual fellowships grow cold, and wanting which he would find it hard, out of the complexity, diversity, and rush of this age, to create such an opportunity of the higher life. He inherits a body of

opinion, which, if it sometimes limits, far more often aids; for best thoughts have historic roots, and no generation and no set of men could proceed far into truth without the great accomplishment of all human study, summed up in the body of opinion which prevails throughout the world at any given time.

The Liberal Christian would not get far in his thought if he were obliged to think his way from the beginning on such vast problems as those suggested by the words, God, soul, Jesus, prayer, church, and immortality.

The Liberal Christian inherits also a moral sanction, without which inheritance his best life would be impossible. If it were necessary to begin and say of every act and thought and aim whether it were good or bad, how far could one hope to journey upon the moral way? Philosophers may still debate as to what ultimate sanction there can be for right, as to the nature of conscience, and the true end of conduct; but while they debate, the world will go on its way, guided by the conscience which, whatever its nature, has developed through the millions of years of human existence, and will do that which the experience of all time has proven good and right. The Liberal Christian inherits not only moral sanctions, not only the conscience, but the Christian conscience, — that is, the conscience mellowed and quickened by the thought of the love of God, awakened and exalted by the example of Jesus, the Christ.

These things, it is true, constitute the inheritance also of those who call themselves "orthodox" Christians. Neither the liberal nor the orthodox — no, nor all Christians even — can claim a monopoly upon these. These are our common human inheritance; our common Christian inheritance, if so be that we make the sacrifice of effort necessary to their full perception and attainment. The common inheritance is deeper than all the differences

of thought or method. The Christian world is slowly learning that there are more important issues than those of doctrines and forms. One believes that God is Trinity; another that He is Unity; but the great question is, do both know His presence in the heart and obey His will in daily life? One believes in an inerrant Scripture, the other that the Bible is the record of the thoughts and deeds of men; but the important matter is that both should know the inspirations which reverent reading of inspiring thoughts might give. One worships God by rites and sacraments; another in the closet when the door is shut. The question is not as between these two with their different ways, but rather between them, on the one hand, and, on the other, those who

"... lift not hands in prayer."

One believes God to have been incarnated only in the man of Galilee; another sees God incarnated still in all that lives. It matters not as between these two; the vital question is that somewhere man may behold the semblance of His face. The real issues of religion, we are coming to perceive, are, after all, with the unbelieving, that somehow they may explain life's riddles and perplexities, gain strength for the burden, ease for the pain, and light for the darkened day. One would have a church of rites and creeds and symbols; another the church of the free. Let there be peace between them, that the needy soul may find a place where he may learn of God, and gain the hope that is in the Father. May the issues of dogma, which seem to be silently giving place, continue to give place to the real issue, that of essential religion; that its challenge, its confidence, and its purifying power may be in the hearts of all God's children! Thus Christian Union approaches.

James Martineau says that while scholars seek the

basis in fact, and ecclesiastics in some treaty of peace, those who pass behind the doctrinal differences and linger near the springs of human piety and hope, are learning the way of the true unity of the Church. That their number is increasing is the present hope of a more united and more efficient Church.

The common Christian heritage is the true bond of fellowship. The Liberal Christian stands outside the older organizations because he cannot conscientiously stand within them. He is glad to have a company of his own, however small, because the soul is made for companionship, and even the closet prayer means the brotherly greeting and the affection of believers. Yet the Liberal Christian rejoices that his heritage is from all. He leaves the older churches because of their limitations, but he still rejoices in all the good they ever enjoyed and in all they still enjoy.

> "All of good the past hath had
> Remains to make our own time glad."

And it remains to gladden all who in our time seek its joy. I need not be a Catholic in order to read with profit the inspiring words of Thomas à Kempis, or to be chastened by the example of St. Francis. I need not be a Methodist and accept John Wesley's theology and church government in order to rejoice in his fervor, his spiritual power and humane impulse. One need not join the Episcopal church in order to be blessed by the broad and lofty message of Phillips Brooks; nor are the Congregationalists alone in the benefits of Beecher's ministry. There are no rights of patent on the spirit of God. What He gives he gives forever, and He gives to all.

But the Liberal Christian has not only the common heritage of Christianity and of the world. His also is the heritage of freedom; of the freedom which means

progress and improvement. There is for him a Bible — the same Bible which others enjoy. But his is also the freedom to read it in the light of all the latest thought and study. While other churchmen must make compromises with their professed beliefs, the Liberal is expected to make no compromise with reason or with conscience. This is a freedom purchased at a price. For this have modern martyrs suffered. It is a heritage which not many yet enjoy, but which many are now struggling to win. To view that struggle should make the Liberal grateful for his heritage.

The Liberal Christian has not only a Sabbath, but a Sabbath made for man, and to be used as the spirit shall direct. It is not his to spend it as his fathers spent, because they so decreed, but to spend it as his heart shall choose and his own mind direct, for the welfare of the life God gave him to save.

For the Liberal Christian there is the institution of worship, and there is the freedom to modify, adapt, remould it to fit the new needs of a new age. It is his to omit the outgrown phrase and thought, and to enrich by all the contributions of God's later inspiration. That the Liberal has not made his service of worship richer is due only to his occupation with other lines of religious work; but that his worship has grown rich through the freedom he enjoys is attested not only by the spiritual atmosphere of many a Liberal Church, but by the spirituality of so many beautiful lives which have been nurtured at the altar of the Liberal Church; more than all, by the reverent hymns the Liberal singers have contributed to all churches, and by the books of prayer which have found their way from the hearts of such as Martineau and Theodore Parker. Such fruits of the heritage of freedom are not to be bartered for any chance of dignity of service or unity of rite.

For the Liberal there is a body of opinion, but for him there is no bondage to it. His is the heritage of freedom of thought. He may accept what remains after the corrections of this critical age. He may vitalize this with the new truth this age of discovery has wrought. The Liberal Christian has the old heritage of the thought of God, which prophets, seers, sages, and saints slowly toiled toward. He inherits also the God revealed through the larger reaches of thought, imagination, and hope, in this increasing age. The thought of life itself, of the Christ, of the future world — these increase in meaning and in power with the ever widening vistas of human intelligence. The larger view is the Liberal's heritage.

Besides this heritage of a common Christianity, and this larger heritage of freedom to apply new truth, the Liberal Christian has also all the heritage of Christianity, not all of which has yet been appreciated, and a world of heritage since Christianity. Christianity came in the fulness of time. It profited by the ages of development which preceded it. Into it flowed currents from older world-streams. It appropriated much of the best of Judaism. It later took inspirations and colorings — not all of them dark — from Greece and Rome and the sterner North. The heritage of Christianity goes back more than eighteen hundred years; it reached back to the day —

> "When the first man stood God conquered,
> With his face to heaven upturned."

The Liberal Christian has this heritage as a Christian, but as a Liberal he has more. For Christianity has not been all the life of humanity for the past eighteen hundred years. God hath not left himself without witness in any time. Great parallel streams have been gathering strength and beauty while the Christian waters have

flowed within their banks. No one revelation exhausts the Infinite. Sturdy hearts and reaching, searching souls have consecrated the best in every people to the progress of faith. The Liberal, because free, has his heritage from all lands and countries. The Bibles of the nations are chapters in his Sacred Book; the litanies of nations enrich his rites; the songs of all peoples make glad his heart; the faith and hope and love of all help in his upbuilding. The word God hath spoken to Buddha and Socrates and Plato, to Zoroaster and Mohammed, to the poet and the scientist of to-day, all become vocal in the message from on high. The Liberal is glad to believe that —

> "One accent of the Holy Ghost,
> The heedless world hath never lost."

Glad is he to claim every accent as his heritage.

The challenge to the Liberal Christian is great. If he would know the greatness of his heritage he must prove it by his life. He may be actually, as he is potentially, joint heir with every blessed soul, even with the Christ; joint heir in all the richness of God's revelations, in the wondrous sense of His love and forgiveness and majestic power, in all the lofty aspirations and deep, enkindling zeals which have tuned the heart of man to the music of eternity, and taught the mortal soul to lay hold upon immortality. All this may truly be his inheritance, if so be that he shall prove his claim by the quality, the worth, the richness of his own spiritual life.

The responsibility of the Liberal Christian is not less than his challenge. "Freely ye have received, freely give," is not only an injunction, but a fundamental principle of the higher life. Every man is in duty bound to live up to his best inheritance. If material riches bear with them responsibilities, how much more does the spiritual heritage come with duties none may shrink. Born

in a Christian land, no man is morally free to be a pagan. He may transcend the faith of his race, but he cannot fall below it and be a man. The Liberal Christian is not only responsible for the maintenance of the standard of thought, emotion, and conduct, which Christianity has established — for this he is responsible with other Christians; but he is also responsible for the maintenance of the freedom, the broader view, the richer inspiration which has come to him. The heritage which the fathers bequeathed the sons bears with it the unquestioned duty of fulfilment. The end is not yet. Christianity is not yet wholly Christian. Freedom is not yet fully won, and far is it from being fully used. All truth has not yet been surcharged with reverence, nor has reverence been taught to respect only truth. Because the Liberal Christian stands with back upon the past, the mighty force of which has pressed him into this day, therefore must he stand with face upon a future in which the promise and potency of the past and of this present shall be still more unfolded.

The Liberal Christian, because he is liberal, ought to be even more ardent than others of the name to help all men share his Christianity; because he is Christian, he should be more concerned that all should share the breadth and liberality, the inspiration and privilege of which so bless his life. Receiving most, he should be most zealous to share. With such a heritage, and with the receptive spirit which finds constantly increasing richness of thought and life, the Liberal is prepared, as is no other, to go forth to that ministry which the world in anxiety and pain so long awaits. If the Liberal Christian would be true to his blessed heritage, he must not prove false in any slightest degree to this beseeching opportunity.

[No. 114]

THE

CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT.

BY

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christanity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT.

When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth. — JOHN xvi. 13.

ONE of the most striking characteristics of Christian theology is the subordinate place which has been, as a rule, assigned to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian formula, which has for many centuries represented the faith of the vast majority of the Christian Church, announces the relationship of three equal and separate manifestations of the Godhead, to each of which the devotion of Christians may with equal fitness turn. In the practical piety, however, of great numbers of believers the thought of the divine Fatherhood and the recognition of the work of the Spirit have been in large degree dominated by the peculiar power and persuasiveness of the doctrine of the Son. It is not surprising that the person of Jesus should have had this peculiar homage. Out of the vastness of the methods of the Father, out of the vagueness of the work of the Spirit, stands this human figure, with the affections, friendships, trials, and tears of human life, tempted as we are, yet without sin; and many a life which has seemed to itself a stranger among the great designs of the Providence of God or the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit has felt itself at home in the companionship of the self-sacrificing and suffering Jesus. On this natural desire of the human heart for the sympathy of God many theologians have seized, and have taught a Christo-

centric faith, in which the search for God shall be satisfied in the person of Christ. Without entering into any discussion of the validity of the Trinitarian formula, it is obvious that this exclusive emphasis upon one of its factors is but a partial utilization of its scope and significance. It is, in fact, a kind of Christological Unitarianism. The features of the Father are hidden behind the mighty processes of creation and evolution; the witness of the Spirit remains undetached as a distinct personality from the influence of the Father and of the Son; and there is left amid the shifting complexity of theological conceptions the single convincing revelation of the word made flesh, full of its unmistakable grace and truth. Back, then, to Jesus the heart of simple piety turns; and the theologian meets this Christo-centric emotion with his doctrine of an immanent, eternal, present Christ. "My faith in God," said such a man, "and even my faith in the goodness of the world, are the product of my loyalty to Jesus Christ." And the same note of spiritual stability is struck by the great poet of Christian theology: —

> "The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the all-great were the all-loving, too,—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
> Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!"

Yet in the teaching of Jesus himself nothing is more conspicuous than his emphasis on the mission of the Holy Spirit. Standing at the end of his own ministry, Jesus distinctly announces that his work is partial and preparatory, and that the truth to which he testifies is to be a progressive revelation. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now." "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." To his followers this thought of a progressive revelation seemed simply paralyzing. They had believed that he would himself guide them into all truth, and they were bewildered

at his declaration that there were many things necessarily undisclosed by him. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest," says Thomas; "Whither goest thou?" asks Peter; "Show us the Father," is the still more elementary demand of Philip; until at last the thought of the unfinished revelation sweeps over them with such a wave of discouragement that they do not even ask, "Whither goest thou?" because "sorrow has filled their hearts." In Jesus, on the other hand, there appears no such sense of prematureness in departure or incompleteness in work. The end of his ministry has come just where it should. "It is expedient for you," he says, "that I go away." He finds tranquillity and strength in the assurance that his own work is to be taken up into the greater unity of the purposes of God, and to receive its interpretation, not alone through that which it has given, but through that for which it has prepared the way. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me." Beyond his own teaching, beyond his own life, Jesus discerns the movement of history guided by the Spirit of the truth; and. having touched his friends with a susceptibility to that Spirit of truth, he trusts them with the most splendid confidence to the progressive revelation. How majestic in its self-effacement is his thought of the world! Onward and ever onward is to move the life of man, into disclosures of the life of God which even Jesus himself was not permitted to unfold. From the Father and the Son, as the creeds with profound truthfulness repeat, is to proceed the Spirit of the truth; and through that procession of the Holy Ghost the life of God is to reveal itself from age to age.

> "Nor bounds, nor clime, nor creed thou know'st;
> Wide as our needs, thy favors fall.
> The white wings of the Holy Ghost
> Stoop, seen or unseen, o'er the heads of all."

How meagre and arid would seem to Jesus a scholastic discussion concerning the personality of the Holy Spirit, when he was praying that the personality of his friends might be made holy by that Spirit! It is the witness of the life of God in the soul of man. It is the immanent Deity, the progressive revelation, the undeparting and undiminished inspiration. With a sublime and tranquil faith Jesus delivers his friends to the guidance of this Spirit, and departs from them with the sense that his mission is complete when he has committed them to the direction of the Spirit of the truth.

Such is the teaching of Jesus; and through the whole course of Christian history, while many souls have found their sufficient satisfaction in the doctrine of the Son, there have been many natures in all communions which have received with peculiar reverence this witness of the mission of the Spirit. Such souls create an apostolic succession of the Holy Ghost. They have felt the touch of God upon his world and upon themselves. They have rested in the strength of the Everlasting Arms. They have listened to the harmonies and pathos of human experience. They have committed themselves to the Spirit of the truth, and have been led by it wherever it will; and then, as they turn back to Jesus, they have seen that in this attitude of spiritual alertness and responsiveness his life also was sustained, and that the Spirit of the truth proceeds not from the Father only, but from the influence and teaching of the Son.

Who are these interpreters of the mission of the Spirit? They are the devout souls in every age who have found God and rested in him — the idealists with their philosophy, the transcendentalists with their vision, the poets, the seers, the mystics of the Universal Church. A strange and varied fellowship they make, of many races, traditions, and creeds, held in the unity of the Spirit of the truth,

witnesses of the life of God in the souls of men. They utter themselves in a unison of language which is neither ancient nor modern, but timeless, universal, one. Across the centuries speaks the Jew Philo: "God has breathed into man from heaven a portion of his own divinity." "The soul of man is an indivisible portion of that divine and blessed Spirit"; and with this word of Hebrew wisdom is heard the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, "The life was the light of men." A century passes, and Plotinus bears witness, "The wise man recognizes the idea of the good within him; this he develops by the withdrawal into the holy place of his own soul." Other centuries pass, and Bernard of Clairvaux, preacher, administrator, saint, gives testimony: "It is in the Spirit of sound, but of penetration; not talkative, but effective; that union with God occurs." "The word is not one not dinning the ears, but persuading the affections." Still other centuries pass, and the Dominican Tauler preaches: "When the mind is rightly directed, it tendeth toward this ground whose image is far beyond its power." "This revelation must take place in the Spirit; for God is a Spirit, and our created spirits must be united to and lost in the Uncreated." So through the ages is renewed this serene message. "Madam," says the holy Franciscan to Madam Guyon, "you are disappointed and perplexed because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will find him"; and the pupil soon testifies, "The soul passing out of itself, by dying to itself, necessarily passes into its divine object." "My own experience seemed to me a verification of this." German theology begins its modern period with the declaration of Schleiermacher, that the Christian consciousness is the test of Christian truth, and that the sense of dependence upon God supplants all need of proof of the being of God; and German criticism re-

calls the saying of Richard Rothe, that "next to the Bible as a help to the religious life, stand the writings of the mystics." Even across the broad and shadowless region of English thought, with its philosophy of utility and its theology of an Establishment, there strike at times these softer shadows of the witness of the Spirit, like soft clouds that fleck a treeless field. "Great things," writes George Fox, "did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful paths were opened unto me." "As people come into subjection to the Spirit of God, they receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being." Finally, the same strain of this tranquil music of the soul is heard amid the noise of commercialism in the New World, and is greeted with a peculiar responsiveness. How many souls in how many religious communions have been supported by Emerson's confident words: "Within man is the soul of the holy, the wise silence, the universal beauty, the eternal one." How many have sung to themselves the confessions of Jones Very:

> "In finding thee are all things round us found,
> In losing thee are all things lost beside."

How many have greeted with gratitude the words of Phillips Brooks: "It is a blessed thing that in all times there have always been men to whom religion has not presented itself as a system of doctrine, but as an elemental life in which the soul of man came into very direct and close communion with the soul of God." "It is the mystics of every age who have done most to blend the love of truth and the love of man within the love of God, and so to keep alive or restore a healthy tolerance."

Thus, if we may give to the theological phrase a new significance, we may trace the long procession of the Holy Ghost, winding through the paths of Christian history, separated a little from the main body of believers, dis-

trusted often for indifference to theological or ecclesiastical details, yet transmitting through the ages the apostolic succession of the spiritual life, testifying to the inner light which is the life of God, undisturbed among transitions of theology or conflicts of sects, confident and forward-looking among the mysteries of life, because recalling the Master's promise that the Spirit of the truth will lead them into all truth. And never was this witness of the Spirit so broadly manifested as to-day. In all branches of the Christian Church a new confidence appears in the living God, the immanent Christ, the Christian consciousness, the significance of the soul. As long ago as the twelfth century an Italian mystic, whom Dante places in his Paradise with Saint Anselm and with Hugo of Saint Victor, conceived that the movement of history was to unfold itself in three great periods — the first revealing the character of the Father, the second teaching the gospel of the Son, the third imparting the mission of the Spirit, and that these periods were to succeed each other as the spring succeeds the winter and the summer succeeds the spring, or as the dawn follows the night and the day follows the dawn. We need not enter into these vast speculations of universal history to find a place for the Spirit of the truth; but this, at least, we may perhaps believe, that, as a new century summons the religious life to a new examination of its creed and conduct, it will be discerned that never before was that creed so simple, so self-evidencing, or so sincere. It may be that the church of the twentieth century is to be the church of the Spirit, and that the text of its preaching is to be the Master's word: "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

And now I go on to ask, as we gather here in loyalty to our special faith, What to us is this lineage of the spiritual life? What have we in common with this fellowship of souls in many ages and churches who have lived in the

Spirit? Many lines of influence and inheritance, no doubt, meet in the Unitarian movement; and many types of preaching and living present themselves among us to-day. From one point of view we may be regarded as sheer dissenters, protestants against the prevailing creed, anti-Trinitarians. It was a work which had to be done, — this defence of simplicity and reasonableness in religion, this attack upon statements of doctrine which degraded the nature of man and insulted the nature of God. Yet it was an incidental rather than, as many imagine, a final task; and it confronts us not only with a duty, but with a peculiar temptation. The creed of negation constantly solicits us to a fellowship of denial and a policy of obstruction. It is a creed easy to preach and still easier to practise. It encourages the poor conceit of conscious superiority and the barren homiletics of superficial controversy. If such a creed, as many of our critics and some of our adherents seem to believe, were the foundation of our faith; if our communion were but a cave of Adullam, where, as the book of Samuel says, "every one that was discontented gathered themselves" — we might have our little day of usefulness, like other forms of negation, and should then be lost in the inevitable reaffirmations of the Church. In comparison with such a communion a house built upon the sand would be a monument of stability and permanence.

From another point of view the Unitarians may appear to be the representatives of the once dreaded movement of English rationalism and German criticism. The English movement in philosophy, beginning with Locke and ending with Mill, the scientific habit of mind in Priestley, and the constant controversy with an established church, all gave to the earlier Unitarianism of Great Britain an apologetics of externalism. "The Scriptures," wrote the sainted Lant Carpenter, "are our only guide." The ra-

tionalism of the Unitarians had no other foundation than that which supported the orthodoxy they opposed. It was an issue of interpretation, concerning whose principles both parties were agreed. This English rationalism was soon re-enforced by the more learned criticism of Germany; and the problem of interpretation began to concern not texts of Scripture only, but the very character of the Bible itself. It was a learned, unshrinking, scientific process, in whose flame supernaturalism, in its traditional form, was to be consumed, and theology was to be tried as by fire. To this enterprise of candid inquiry the Unitarians committed themselves. The first literary venture of Theodore Parker was a translation of De Wette's Introduction to the Old Testament. Two generations of our ministers were taught the demonstrations of rational criticism. Mysticism was to their teachers a title of contempt. "Schleiermacher," said Andrews Norton, "well called the veil-maker." It is a strain in our blood of which we may be justly proud. The rationalism of that generation opened the way for the more fruitful methods of the higher criticism which is revolutionizing Biblical criticism to-day, and the spirit of rationalism still gives to those who accept it a sense of composure among the Biblical controversies which threaten to rend the life of many a Christian Church.

Yet how incomplete is the story of the Unitarian spirit, if it were told either in the language of theological dissent or of philosophical rationalism! How far we still stand from the spirit of Channing or of Martineau! How obvious it is that another line of inheritance must be considered in the interpretation of our history! Looking back upon his early training, the leader of our generation makes his confession. "Steeped in empirical and necessarian modes of thought," writes Martineau, "I served out successive terms of willing captivity to Locke and Hartley, to Collins, Edwards, and Priestley, to Bentham and James

Mill"; and he recalls himself as "a logical prig, in whom I am humbled to recognize myself." Was there ever, indeed, a school of philosophy less capable of permanent control over the greatest of modern idealists; and was it not a distinct epoch in modern philosophy when in Germany Martineau received what he calls "the gift of fresh conceptions, the unsealing of hidden openings of self-consciousness, with unmeasured corridors and sacred halls behind"? What have we here come upon but a new line of inheritance, the signs of which are easy to recognize in our ideals and habit of mind to-day? Behind all the differences in definitions of the Godhead, which may set us apart from the main body of the Church, and beneath all principles of Biblical interpretation, lie these fresh conceptions of self-consciousness, this confidence in the unveiling of hidden springs, this sense of the life of God in the soul of man.

Some thirty years ago I was walking as a student with the saintly Professor Tholuck, in the famous garden where he discoursed with two generations of Americans, and he inquired in what communion of Christians I had been reared; and, on my replying that my father was a Unitarian minister, the great man remarked, "Ah! the Unitarians, they are mystics!" It seemed to me then a strange definition; and many a critic of Unitarianism, and some perhaps of its defenders, would think the German scholar ill informed. Yet, in fact, his judgment was profoundly and demonstrably true. The Unitarians are mystics. They have contended for theological simplicity, they have contributed to Biblical interpretation; but the representative expressions of their habit of mind are to be sought, not in these fields of learning, but in their witness of the present life of God in the present life of man. It is a line of descent which has been, for the most part, overlooked, even by eulogists of Unitarianism. It is, indeed, not the

trait of our stock which is most open to observation; and there are many lives among us with hardly a trace of such a pedigree. Yet through the blood of many generations runs this inherited strain of free and rational piety, which it is well for us, as we gather here, to trace. Three great names sufficiently illustrate the Unitarianism of Great Britain and the United States during the seventy-five years which we are met to recall; and, while each of these men had his part in theological and philosophical progress, each of them is primarily and fundamentally a prophet of the spiritual life. In Channing, as was said of him by that kindred spirit, John Hamilton Thom, "the prominent thought, the master light of all his seeing, is the spiritual relation of himself and of every man to God." "It is the mighty monotone of his mind, like the monotone of the ocean, which souls that are not attuned to it may sometimes feel oppressive." This is our inheritance from Channing, a monotone of the spirit, a sense of the divine in man which rises out of the waves of human experience, as great rollers with their steady movement heave up out of a tossing sea. In Parker it must be admitted, this witness of the Spirit is less uniform and continuous. There seemed to reside in him two natures, one aggressive and combative — the nature of the reformer — the other contemplative and poetic — the nature of the mystic. One of his natures was stirred by Garrison and the sense of wrong; the other side was stirred by Schleiermacher and the sense of God. There was the Parker of the platform and the Parker of the prayers; and, while the history of reform may record the activity of the agitator, the history of religion will give a still more permanent place to the spiritual intuitionalist. Finally, in Martineau, the sufficient exponent of our own generation, all the lines of our spiritual inheritance meet. His contributions to theology began sixty years ago in the Liverpool controversy, and

reached their monumental expression in his "Study of Religion." The interpretation of Scripture was his concern in early youth, and the search for "The Seat of Authority" the last inquiry of his extreme old age. Great, however, as were his contributions to theological dissent and Biblical learning, neither of these interests exhausted or even represented the main direction of his mind. Martineau is at heart a mystic. His spirit dwells with the Spirit of the truth, unembarrassed by transitions in theology or exegesis. There is, he says, "a close affinity, perhaps ultimate identity, between religion and poetry." "Preaching is essentially a lyric expression of the soul." He was, as he wrote not long ago in one of his noblest utterances, "not flung into a scene which he has not learned to consecrate." To make "his affirmation of God," he had taken his stand, "not on the shifting alluvial slope of history, but on the rooted rock which belongs to the very structure of the world."

Such is the witness of the great names of our history; and when, in our own time, one would detect among the varied expressions of denominational life the heart of a contemporary religious movement, to what evidence should he turn? He should look, I think, not so much to its machinery of organization or abstract statements of belief, but to the religious sentiment itself, as it expresses itself in lyrics of praise and prayer. Some ways of faith hardly admit of being sung at all, and have made no important contribution to the history of Christian verse. Other forms of faith have borne as their flower a special quality of sacred lyrics, with a fragrance of their own. The heart of Methodism is disclosed in the hymns of the Wesleys; the nature of evangelical piety is laid bare in the hymns of Watts and Doddridge; the inner faith of the Moravians is told in their glowing hymns; and in the hymns of Keble and Newman is the characteristic note of the Anglican

Church. "If a man," said Fletcher of Saltoun, "were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation." With equal justice we might say that if a man were permitted to make the hymns of a church he need not care who should make its theology. Tried, then, by this interior test, what is the spirit of the Unitarian tradition? No one can fail to see that its religious life has uttered itself in a lyric expression of singular freshness and beauty, touching in many moods and keys one dominating note. It is a hymnology of the Spirit, the song of those who rest within the Everlasting Arms. It is not an accident that out of a religious movement which is often held to be sheer rationalism or dissent there has grown the most clearly defined type of religious verse which this country has produced. It is not an accident that the lyrics of Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Bryant, and Emerson proceed from lives bred in the rational piety of the Unitarians, or that Whittier, who must be joined with them in the character of his verse, was joined with them also in the fellowship of the "Inner Light." And, when we pass from the great masters, what does it mean that from a group of minor poets of the same tradition — from Samuel Longfellow and Furness and Hedge and many others among the elders, from Hosmer, Gannett, and Chadwick, and many others of the present generation — there has proceeded a strain of lyric theism whose music penetrates many a church where the doors are closed against the poets? It means that beneath the vigorous rationalism and sincere dissent of the Unitarians there is a deeper movement of religious life, a consciousness of God which none but a poet can utter, a spiritual lineage which unites these modern minds to the great company of witnesses of the real presence — the fellowship of the Church of the Spirit.

It would be contrary to the very thought I have in mind

if this claim to an inheritance of spiritual religion should be interpreted as the arrogant assumption of an exclusive right. The truth which makes men free is always the same truth. The sympathies of the Church of the Spirit are not denominational or provincial or contemporary. The devout Unitarian finds a familiar speech in Thomas à Kempis and in Fénelon. The spirit of Jacob Böhme is no stranger to the spirit of Emerson. The "Discourses concerning Religion" of Schleiermacher, in all probability, suggested the "Discourse concerning Religion" of Theodore Parker. The idealism of Fichte would have been greeted by Channing as the voice of a friend. It is, indeed, not easy to fix the historic place of these witnesses of the Spirit. When one of them sings —

> "Go not, my soul, in search of him,
> But to thyself repair;
> Wait thou amid the silence dim,
> And thou shalt find him there"

— is this some Neo-Platonist of the early Church, or is it Frederic Hosmer and his "Thought of God"? And when, again, we repeat —

> "O love divine of all that is
> The sweetest and the best,
> Fain would I come and rest to-night
> Upon thy tender breast"

— is this a verse of Madam Guyon, or is it the rationalism of Chadwick? Very humbly, then, and with a sense of imperfect obedience and a conscious insignificance among the great movements of Christian history, and yet with a sense of legitimacy, we take our place, not alone with those who contend for theological truth, but with the great company of the devout life, the Church of the Spirit. The Unitarians are mystics. Within their limited province and power it becomes their high vocation to testify to the

simplicity and reality of rational religion. They may have their place in defining the sources of authority, they may do their part in establishing the rule of righteousness; but their interior spirit is that of an unobscured and uninterrupted relation of the soul of man with the life of God. Standing at the end of his own brief ministry, the Master of the spiritual life, with self-effacing composure, promises to his friends the guidance of the Spirit of the truth, which was to lead them to greater revelations than even he could possibly disclose. It must be the same with any communion which sincerely desires to follow him. Much they may contend for of liberty in the Church and of righteousness in the world, and for either of these ends they may be content to remain a protesting and free minority; yet a greater privilege and a more imperative summons comes to them to transmit the witness of the Spirit of the truth, which shall guide men into richer revelations than it is possible for any single sect to teach or even to dream.

What, then, we go on to ask, are the marks of this Church of the Spirit, and what are the special duties of those who shall enter its communion? The Church of the Spirit, one must answer, is first of all a living church; and a living church, like all other living things, is marked by growth, progress, change. Fixity is not a sign of life and power, but of sterility and death. "There is nothing so destructive," said Thomas Arnold, "because so contrary to nature, as the strain to keep things fixed;" and, as one looks across the Christian world to-day, and sees the intensity of this strain to keep things fixed, he is moved, not by a sense of satisfaction that the strain is to snap, but by the pathos of this destructive and hopeless demand for fixity. The truth is ever revealing new aspects of itself: the truth that can move the heart must itself be a moving truth. "If God shall reveal anything to you," said John Robinson, "by any other instrument of his, be

as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive anything by my ministry; for I am confident that God has more truth yet to break out of his holy word." What is this but a repetition of the Master's promise that, when he had gone away, the Spirit of the truth would come and lead men into all truth? And does this not teach us why Jesus dared to give the Spirit of the truth that other and surprising name, the Comforter? What a strange word is this — that the Spirit of the truth is a comforter! How uncomforting, how uncomfortable the truth often seems! How many a devout soul, how many a Christian communion has dreaded to go on into the unknown truth, lest the truth, as it should be given, should bring no comfort! Yet this is the witness of all deep experiences of life, — that the only substantial comfort for a soul or for a church is in perfect loyalty to the truth as it is given. The only comforting revelation is a progressive revelation. What comfort can it be to build one's faith on a foundation which any day may slip from beneath one's feet, to wake some morning and find that a new biblical discovery has robbed us of our evidence of God! Stability for a church, as for a planet, is in its motion. The Church of the Spirit is a church of hope.

Again, the Church of the Spirit is a religious church. Exaggerated as it would be to speak of an irreligious church, who can deny that a great part of the energy of religious organizations is given to matters that are not religious, to the perfecting of machinery instead of the communicating of power? No church, it is true, can be delivered from the care of mechanism, no power can be utilized without machinery. Yet the aim of all well-directed skill, in the Church, as in the world of industry, is to transmit the power at one's command with the least possible obstruction or loss; and the chief source of waste of power, in a church as in a factory, is in the hindering

of its energy or in diverting it from its proper work. We look, once more, at the issues which consume the sessions of ecclesiastical councils; we look, indeed, at the methods we are ourselves tempted to employ as substitutes for the religious life; and how far away seems the Church of the Spirit! "What conclusions these controversies may come to," lately said a brave leader in a sorely embarrassed church, "is of no consequence: the only important thing is that they shall come to an end." And what shall bring to an end this waste of power, and make the Church of Christ a clear channel for the energy of God? It is a renewal of confidence in the witness of the Holy Spirit, a trust like that of Jesus in the Spirit of the truth. What the Church needs in its preaching and in its working is not more mechanism, or organization, or external reenforcement, but more confidence in its message, more consecration, more spirituality, more faith. The prayer of the present time should not be, "Lord, increase our congregations, our statistics, our income," but, "Lord, increase our faith." The Church of the Spirit is a church of faith.

Once more the Church of the Spirit is a ministering Church. By the grace of God we have come to a time when the chief interest of the world is outward-looking, generous, self-forgetting. It is the age of the social question; and the test of the Church, as of all other human organizations, must be found in its contribution to social service. But how slightly we are aware that effectiveness in social service does not proceed from the arrangements of reform! Behind all the social mechanism in which we may enlist there is a social dynamic to be secured; and the fundamental need of an age of social service is not so much for more channels of social usefulness as for more social wisdom, insight, patience, and power. And from what source does this power of phil-

anthropy proceed? It springs from the hidden sense of God, from the life of idealism, insight, vision, and faith, as the full stream which moves the modern industry flows from its secret source among the quiet hills. No graver mistake could be made than to fancy that the outward-looking activity of the present age is a detachment of its interest from religion. It is, on the contrary, a witness of religion, as the volume of the stream testifies to the abundance of its springs. Without a supply of social idealism the stream of social service soon runs dry.

Seventy years ago in the city of Boston there occurred a renaissance of practical philanthropy, which still gives to the city a leadership in social service. From one small group of closely associated friends there proceeded in those days the first illustration in this country of scientific charity in the work of Tuckerman, the first scientific treatment of the blind and feeble-minded in the work of Dr. Howe, the first intelligent care of the insane in the work of Dorothea Dix. But whence came the spiritual power which poured itself through these channels? It came from a person who was neither a reformer nor agitator nor practical leader, but a preacher, a thinker, a seer. Dr. Tuckerman was a lifelong intimate of William Ellery Channing. Dr. Howe was within the inner circle of his friendship. Miss Dix was one of his own household. The new philanthropy was the witness of a new religious force. Behind its wisdom and devotion lay a new faith in the worth of the human soul. Was this an unusual relationship in the history of social reform? On the contrary, it is illustrated by each transition in the history of social progress. Behind the liberty of Florence stood the prophecy of Savonarola; behind the *Innere Mission* of Germany the piety of Francke and of Wichern; behind the social movement of the Church of England the philosophy of Maurice; behind the new philanthropy of Boston the preaching of

Phillips Brooks. Thus it always has been; and, if in any congregation to-day one observes a new stirring of healthy-minded social service, he may be sure that back of the sense of the human need there is a personal source of faith and courage, like a throbbing engine communicating spiritual power. More than all, and behind all, is the new birth of philanthropy which proceeded from Christianity itself. It was an epoch hardly less marked in its thought of man than in its thought of God. The "Caritas" of the Christians had a scope and quality which the "Prodigalitas" of the Roman world never knew. Yet more extraordinary than Christian philanthropy itself was the origin of this new love of man. Jesus was not a reformer or organizer or social agitator; he was a prophet, a revealer, a mystic, a seer. Yet from his vision of the love of God issued the new summons to the service of man. "For their sakes," said Jesus, in perhaps his greatest statement of his mission, "I sanctify myself." "For their sakes" — that is the end toward which the Christian life proceeds, the end of generous service. "I sanctify myself" — that is the beginning from which the Christian life proceeds, the dynamic of personal consecration. The disciple of Jesus Christ sanctifies himself for others' sakes. The Church of the Spirit is a church of love.

And what then, finally, is this living, praying, ministering Church — this Church of hope and faith and love? What is it but organized religion as Jesus desired that it should live and do its work? With what a mighty hope he viewed the movement of the world, white as he saw it for his harvest, safe as he felt it to be in the guidance of the Spirit of the truth! With what a supporting faith he turned from all other ways of power, and trusted the dynamic of holiness! With what an individualized love he gave himself to the life of service, not to be ministered

unto, but to minister! Jesus was the most unfaltering of mystics. His spirit dwelt in habitual and unhindered communion with the Spirit of the truth. "I and my Father," he said, "are one." But it was not the sickly mysticism of self-centred meditation: it was the healthy mysticism which utters itself in self-effacing love. "Jesus Christ," says the book of Acts, "went about doing good," God having "anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power." It was the power of the Holy Ghost which made him able to do good. The Church of the ministering Spirit is the Church of Jesus Christ.

And we, who have our humble part in the inheritance of this lineage of the Spirit; we, for whom the way of direct communion with God has been swept clean of obstruction; we, to whom the language of the devout life in all the ages is a not unfamiliar tongue; we, who instead of purchasing with a great price this freedom are free-born members of the Church of the Spirit — what pledge have we to make to-night but of a better loyalty to the Church that moves and prays and ministers — the Church of hope and faith and love? How slight has been our service, how imperfect our attachment to this supreme vocation! How preoccupied have been our minds with mechanism, and how low has run our stream of power! Yet how plain it is that all the forces of spiritual vitality in the present time conspire to direct us where we ought to go! The noise of controversy and the discord of dissent are hushed when the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, comes. The revolving eddies of the age are helpless to detain a Church, when it feels beneath its life the main current of the life of the Spirit. The future welcomes the Church of the Spirit, as a strong breeze comes up out of the sea and swells the sails that have been long becalmed; and the Church which gives itself to that persuasion of the Spirit, coming as the wind comes, viewless, but full of power, is

borne on like a vessel that heads at last upon her proper course. The restlessness of her crew is stilled as they hasten to their new obedience; and they sing together as they trim their sails —

"Why labor at the dull mechanic oar
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the swift current flowing,
Right onward to the eternal shore?"

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[No. 115]

PROGRESSIVE LIBERALISM

IN

THE CLOSING AND THE OPENING CENTURY.

BY

CHARLES W. ELIOT.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

PROGRESSIVE LIBERALISM IN THE CLOSING AND THE OPENING CENTURY.

This essay has no application whatever to the great Greek and Roman communions, those churches being founded on an unqualified authority which does not recognize the right of private judgment. It relates exclusively to the Protestant communions.

The first thing to be observed about progressive liberalism in the closing century is that it is characterized essentially by a series of slow, gradual, and related developments, and not by a succession of sudden, spasmodic, and unconnected shocks. In the opening century it is sure to be characterized by a slow, quiet, giving-effect to a few ideas not new in themselves, but new in respect to diffused acceptance. I shall deal with only four aspects of the broad subject.

1. One deep-striking change to which liberalism has contributed is the change in Protestant opinions concerning the Bible. The Reformation substituted for the infallibility of an institution and its official representative — an institution vast, varying, complex, pervasive, and on occasion vague — another infallibility; namely, the infallibility of a small, unchanging, compact, apprehensible collection of ancient writings, the Bible. Contending vigorously against the infallibility of the Church and the pope, it set up the verbally inspired, inerrant Bible as

infallible authority. Fortunately, the Reformation taught that the humblest Christian might have direct access to this infallible Scripture; and, therefore, it ultimately set up the human reason as the legitimate interpreter of this new infallibility. Now the human reason since the Reformation has not only added wonderfully to its stores of knowledge, but has also developed greatly its penetrating and exploring power. Some new sciences have arisen; the old sciences of philology and history have made astonishing progress; and the general method of inductive reasoning has been applied during the nineteenth century more widely and with much greater success than ever before. The languages of Scripture and the literatures written in those languages are far better known now than they were before the present century; the other sacred writings of the world have become known to the Christian nations; the history of Egypt, Palestine, Greece, and the Roman Empire, has been illuminated by modern archæological research; and the natural sciences have demonstrated countless facts, and have established a few general principles, which throw a flood of light backward on to the beliefs and practices of former generations and the real history of the human race on this earth. Gradually there has appeared a new critical spirit toward the Bible and the supernatural side of religion. What is called the Higher Criticism is nothing but the application to the Bible of methods of research which have been successfully applied to other bodies of ancient historical and literary compositions.

Naturally, the influence of these new powers and new growths is to-day felt chiefly by scholars and reading people. Nevertheless, the popular mind also is not without preparation for the acceptance of new views concerning revelation and supernaturalism in general. In the first place, all people have gradually learned to look

always for a natural explanation of the marvellous; and, secondly, they are thoroughly habituated to incomprehensible or mysterious effects which they firmly believe to be due to natural causes, although they do not in the least understand the modes in which the effects are produced. Thus the comet and the eclipse have lost their terrors even for the most ignorant. All men are persuaded that these phenomena portend nothing, being due to natural though uncomprehended causes. The entire audience at a magician's show is firmly persuaded that there is no magic in the performance, but only skill. The familiar miracle of driving a street-car by an invisible force, brought miles on a wire, though entirely incomprehensible to the common mind, is universally believed to be a purely natural phenomenon. In short, many effects once called miraculous or magical are now accepted as purely natural; and, on the other hand, many effects known to be natural are just as mysterious and wonderful as most of the occurrences described in former centuries as miracles. This state of the popular mind, which has been chiefly developed during the nineteenth century, has prepared the way for the acceptance of new views concerning the Bible and the supernatural in religion.

Again, all through this closing century the relative importance of fact in comparison with theory or speculation has been mounting. Down to the present century the prevalence of myth, fable, and imaginative narration, has characterized the most precious literatures; and even history until lately has had highly imaginative elements. Of late years history has become realistic, and even fiction is photographic in quality. This preference for facts has grown stronger and stronger during the closing century, and is likely to be still more characteristic of the opening. Indeed, theory and speculation are almost discredited, except in a hypothesis which temporarily or

provisionally explains or correlates a group of facts. Even in such cases the hypothesis is avowedly accepted on sufferance and with suspicion.

Still further, we observe that by the present generation broad and hasty generalizations from few particulars, and immense superstructures on small, slight foundations, are in modern instances almost universally derided. They do not excite indignation or scorn: they excite ridicule and contempt. Now the hugest superstructure ever reared on a diminutive foundation, and the most formidable speculation ever based on a minimum of doubtful fact, is the Augustinian systematic theology, resting on the literal truth of the story in Genesis about the disobedience of Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden. The whole superstructure of the generally accepted Protestant systematic theology is founded on the literal acceptance of the Scriptural account of the fall of Adam and Eve. If this account is not a true history, then the whole logical system built on it, including the doctrines of original and imputed sin, of the plan of salvation, of grace, mediation, and atonement, of blood satisfaction and blood purchase, and of regeneration, falls to the ground.

Hear Dr. Charles Hodge, the great Presbyterian theologian, writing about 1870–71, on the nature of the connection between the above doctrines and the account in Genesis of the Fall of Man: —

"Finally, these facts [the Garden of Eden facts] underlie the whole doctrinal system revealed in the Scriptures. Our Lord and his apostles refer to them not only as true, but as furnishing the ground of all the subsequent revelations and dispensations of God. It was because Satan tempted man, and led him into disobedience, that he became the head of the kingdom of darkness, whose power Christ came to destroy, and from whose dominion he redeemed his people. It was because we died in Adam that we must be made alive in Christ. So that the Church Universal has felt bound to receive the record of Adam's temptation and fall as a true historical account."

Hear Dr. Hodge again when he describes what the system is which is built on this indispensable foundation: —

"In the Old Testament and in the New, God is declared to be just, in the sense that his nature demands the punishment of sin; that, therefore, there can be no remission without such punishment, vicarious or personal; that the plan of salvation symbolically and typically exhibited in the Mosaic institution, expounded in the prophets, and clearly and variously taught in the New Testament, involves the substitution of the incarnate Son of God in the place of sinners, who assumed their obligation to satisfy divine justice, and that he did, in fact, make full and perfect satisfaction for sin, bearing the penalty of the law in their stead. All this is so plain and undeniable that it has always been the faith of the Church, and is admitted to be the doctrine of the Scripture by the leading rationalists of our day."

Assuming the infallibility of the Bible, the Augustinian systematic theology starts from the Fall of Man, as recorded in Genesis, and then by a strict, logical process, proves its appalling doctrines from the usage of words, the habitual forms of expression, and the pervading modes of presentation in the infallible Scriptures. All its doctrines are proved by explicit statements or assumptions made in the Bible, or by inferences from these statements or assumptions. The process involves something beyond the infallibility of the Scriptures themselves; namely, the unerring interpretation of the Scriptures. In the centuries since the Reformation, and particularly in the nineteenth century, the human reason, enriched by new stores of knowledge, equipped with new methods of incisive inquiry, and fired with a new zeal for truth, has gradually undermined the faith of the majority of Protestant scholars, first, in the unerring interpretation, and, secondly, in the infallibility of the Bible itself. These scholars no longer believe in the Fall of Man or in the fabric of doctrine which a purely

human logic has built on the Fall. When men begin to protest or resolve that they believe a given doctrine, it is a sure sign that real belief in that doctrine is fading away. Among the masses of Protestants some belief in the infallibility of the Bible still survives; but the opening century will doubtless see the gradual surrender of this transitional belief throughout the Protestant world. The controversial writings of Saint Augustine have dominated Christian systematic theology for fifteen hundred years. Luther, Saint Augustine's disciple, prepared the ruin of his master's system when he declared the Bible infallible, but opened it to the individual inquirer. The nineteenth century has seen the foundations of the structure undermined. The twentieth will see it given over to the bats and the owls, so far as Protestants are concerned. It is not, however, the real Bible which is thus losing its hold. It is the inferential structure which has been built around and over it.

If it be said that, though implicit faith in the Bible as an infallible revelation of literal truth be lost, the real foundations of the old dogmatics will remain unshaken, because they rest on human nature and experience, the answer is that civilized society's convictions about human nature and human conduct have undergone profound modifications during the nineteenth century, and are manifestly undergoing still further modification. Thus, instead of attributing sin in the individual to the innate corruption and perversity of his nature, modern society attributes it in many instances to physical defects, to bad environment, to unwise or wrongful industrial conditions, to unjust social usages, or to the mere weakness of will which cannot resist present indulgences, even when the cost in future suffering stares the victim in the face. With this fundamental reconsideration of the whole doctrine of sin goes grave discussion of the till-now-accepted

ideas of justice, punishment, and reformation. The theologians used to be sure that they perfectly understood God's justice. The jurists and legislators of to-day are not at all sure that they understand even what human justice ought to be. On the whole, the nineteenth century is the least presumptuous of the centuries. The twentieth will be more modest still. Calvin and Jonathan Edwards imagined that they perfectly understood the object of the eternal, hopeless agonies of the damned. In contrast, listen to what a poet-physician says about the mystery of occasional pain in this world: —

> "One stern democracy of anguish waits
> By poor men's cots — within the rich man's gates.
> What purpose hath it? Nay, thy quest is vain:
> Earth hath no answer: if the baffled brain
> Cries, 't is to warn, to punish — Ah, refrain!
> When writhes the child, beneath the surgeon's hand,
> What soul shall hope that pain to understand?
> Lo! Science falters o'er the hopeless task,
> And Love and Faith in vain an answer ask,
> When thrilling nerves demand what good is wrought
> When torture clogs the very source of thought."

2. It is not the authority of the Bible only which has declined during the closing century: all authority has lost force, — authority political, ecclesiastical, educational, and domestic. The decline of political or governmental authority since the Reformation is very striking. The present generation received with derision the sentiment attributed some years ago (incorrectly, in all probability) to the present Emperor of Germany, — *salus populi regis voluntas;* yet at the period of the Reformation nobody would have questioned that sentiment. Ecclesiastical authority has declined in a still more marked degree; and whereas the Church used to rule not only the consciences and opinions, but the daily habits of all Christians, there is now even among devout Catholics the sharpest demarcation between the limited province in which the Church is

absolute and the large secular rest of the world. In education the whole conception of the function of the teacher has changed within fifty years. He no longer drives his pupils to their task, but leads and inspires them; he no longer compels them to copy or commit to memory, but incites them to observe and think. Instead of imposing on them his opinions, tastes, and will, he induces them to form their own opinions, studies their tastes, and tries to invigorate their wills, and teach them self-control. But in no field is the diminution of arbitrary authority more striking than in the family and the home; and in no field has the law more clearly recognized the new liberty than in the domestic relations.

What authority is taking in some measure the place of these declining authorities? I say in some measure, because the world has had too much of authority and not enough of love and freedom. There is an authority which during all the closing century has been increasing in influence: it is the developing social sense, or sense of kin. On the negative side, the restrictions which this sense of social solidarity and mutual accountability impose are in some ways extraordinarily comprehensive and absolute. The conviction that one must not do anything which can be offensive or injurious to one's associates is highly restrictive, — especially when this conviction becomes common and gets incorporated in statute law. Thus it may be doubted if any autocrat ever imposed on a population such a personal restriction as the prohibition of spitting on sidewalks and in public vehicles; yet this prohibition is a public regulation in Massachusetts and many other parts of the Union, although it springs solely from the social sense that the individual must not do what might propagate disease from himself to others. In many parts of modern society the social sense plays the part of a very arbitrary ruler, as appears clearly in the surrender to

trades-unions of the most important elements of their personal liberty by hundreds of thousands of persons. On the positive side, this social solidarity is quite as effectual to procure affirmative action as it is to secure prohibitions. The British navy used to be recruited by the press gang; that is, promising young sailors were seized by force in the coast towns, and dragged on board the ships. Now Kipling and his kind write ballads; and the newspapers, pulpits, and popular meetings arouse a gregarious enthusiasm which sends thousands of young men to labor, suffer, or die in South Africa. It is the sense of common cause which supplies the impelling motive. Would it not be hard to state this doctrine better than it is stated in the brief phrase, "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself"?

Another manifestation of the power of the new social solidarity is the tendency in democratic governments, and in some measure in all governments, to relieve the necessities and increase the satisfactions of the poorest classes on the one hand, and on the other to appropriate in part, and to divide anew as soon as possible, large accumulations of property in single hands. The recent legislation of Switzerland, France, England, and the United States, illustrates the strength of this new authority, — particularly the laws of these countries concerning progressive income taxes, succession taxes, and hours of labor, and for the protection of workmen against accident, and of women and children against overwork. Much of the legislation stigmatized as parental is really due to this strong sentiment of social solidarity. It has all sprung up in the nineteenth century, and it will doubtless grow rapidly in the twentieth.

3. The nineteenth century has seen the rise of a new body of learning called sociology. It is a body of doc-

trine clearly founded on the ethics of the New Testament; but it is at present in a confused, amorphous state. One of its characteristics, however, is hopeful. It aims at the prevention rather than the cure of sin and evil, just as preventive medicine aims at the prevention of disease both in the single individual and in society at large. The Old Testament relies chiefly on prohibition and penalty. It says, "Thou shalt not." For breaking this command, so much penalty is imposed : "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children all the days of thy life." "Thy seed shall be cut off forever." "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Now, faith in penalty as a preventive of wrong-doing and evil has rapidly declined during the nineteenth century; and this is equally true of penalty in this world and of penalty in the next. Barbarous punishments have been everywhere abolished in the civilized world, or are used only in moments of panic or delirium; and barbarous conceptions of punishment after death have been everywhere mitigated or abandoned. The new sociology, based on the Gospel doctrine of love to God and love to man, seeks the improvement of environment, the rectification of vice-breeding evils and wrongs, and the actual realization of the ideal, — "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Sociology rejects also a motive which systematic theology has made much of for centuries, — the motive of personal salvation, which is essentially a selfish motive, whether it relates to this world or to the next. Certainly, it is no better a motive for eternity than it is for these short earthly lives of ours. The motive power of personal reformation and good conduct, and the source of happiness must always be found in love of others and desire to serve them, self-forgetfulness and disinterestedness being indispensable conditions of personal worth

and of well-grounded joy. Sociology perceives that the multitude can no longer be reconciled to a state of misery in this world by the deceptive promise of comforts and rewards in the next. It sympathizes with them in loudly demanding joys in this world.. The promise of Abraham's bosom after death should not reconcile Lazarus to lying at the gate, full of sores, now. The multitudes themselves perceive that wretchedness in this world may easily unfit them for worthy enjoyments either now or hereafter, since it may dwarf the mental and moral faculties through which high enjoyments come. Sociology is of the mind of the angel who bore a torch in one hand and a vase of water in the other, with the one to burn heaven, and with the other to quench hell, that men might be influenced neither by the hope of the one nor the fear of the other.

4. What effect will the great changes in public opinion about revelation and religion which the nineteenth century has wrought, and the twentieth will spread, have on the estimate which the next two or three generations will place on the character and life of Jesus of Nazareth? We have already learnt that the fundamental ethical conceptions recorded in the Gospels had all been anticipated. The fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the conception of God as a spirit, and the Golden Rule, — to name some of the most fundamental of these conceptions, — all occur in writings earlier than the Gospels. But what of that? The true reformer is not he who first conceives a fruitful idea; but he who gets that idea planted in many minds, and fertilizes it there through the power of his personality. Such a reformer was Jesus. He spread abroad, and commended to the minds of many men, the loftiest ethical conceptions the race had won. He vitalized them by his winning and command-

ing presence, and sent them flying abroad on the wings of his own beautiful and heroic spirit. In a barbarous age he was inevitably given the reward of deification, just as the Pharaohs and Alexanders and Cæsars were; and his memory was surrounded by clouds of marvel and miracle during the four or five generations which passed before the Gospels took any settled form. The nineteenth century has done much to disengage him in the Protestant mind from these encumbrances; and the twentieth will do more to set him forth simply and grandly as the loveliest and best of human seers, teachers, and heroes. Let no man fear that reverence and love for Jesus will diminish as time goes on. The pathos and the heroism of his life and death will be vastly heightened when he is relieved of all supernatural attributes and powers. The human hero must not have foreknowledge of the glorious issue of his sacrifices and pains. He must not be sure that his cause will triumph; he must suffer and die without knowing what his sacrifice will bring forth. The human exemplar should have only human gifts and faculties. If these principles are true, the more completely progressive liberalism detects and rejects the misunderstandings and superstitions with which the oral tradition and written record concerning the life of Jesus were inevitably corrupted, the more will love and reverence grow for the splendors of truth and moral beauty which, as a matter of indubitable fact, have shone from the character and teachings of this Jewish youth. Already we see many signs of the approaching fulfilment of Whittier's prophecy, —

> "Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
> What may thy service be?
> Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
> But simply following thee."

PIONEERS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN AMERICA

Being the Great and Thursday Lectures Delivered in Boston in Nineteen Hundred and Three

Size, 5 1-2 x 8 inches; pages, 396; price, $1.50 *net;* postage, 13 cents.

THE purpose and scope of this volume cannot be better shown than by giving the subjects and authors of the thirteen chapters which make up its contents. These are: I. "William Brewster and the Independents," by Edwin D. Mead; II. "Roger Williams and the Doctrine of Soul Liberty," by W. H. P. Faunce; III. "Thomas Hooker and the Principle of Congregational Independency," by Williston Walker, IV "William Penn and the Gospel of th Inner Light," by Benjamin B. Trueblood; V. "Thomas Jefferson and the Influence of Democracy on Religion," by Thomas R. Slicer; VI. "William Ellery Channing and the Growth of Spiritual Christianity," by William W. Fenn; VII. "Horace Bushnell and Progressive Orthodoxy," by Washington Gladden; VIII. "Hosea Ballou and the Larger Hope," by John Coleman Adams; IX. "Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Teaching of the Divine Immanence," by Francis G. Peabody; X. "Theodore Parker and the Naturalization of Religion," by James Eells; XI. "Phillips Brooks and the Unity of the Spirit," by Samuel A. Eliot.

The chapters making up this book were delivered as lectures in Boston in the spring of 1903, and attracted much attention. The purpose of the lectures and of the book is to set forth some of the great principles through which religious freedom in this country was achieved, and the connection with these principles of the great men who advocated them and gave them their power and enduring vitality. These thirteen champions of religious freedom were truly pioneers in the work in which they became so conspicuous, and no one can so fully realize the significance of our present freedom of thought in religious matters as by reading these accounts of the inception and growth of the religious principles which constitute so valued a part of our religious inheritance.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 Beacon Street, Boston

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I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 116]

OUR BELIEFS:

AND

SOME OF THE REASONS FOR THEM.

BY

REV. JAMES T. BIXBY.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

BOSTON.

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OUR BELIEFS; AND SOME OF THE REASONS FOR THEM.

As the early Christians were regarded by the Gentiles and Jews about them as putters-forth of strange doctrine, and were even stigmatized as atheists because they did not recognize the crowd of gods whom the polytheists of their day adored, so are Unitarians often ranked by Trinitarians as infidels and heretics, and their views are objects of vague condemnation or misrepresentation, especially among those who are unacquainted with their real doctrines; and even those who are born and bred as Unitarians are often somewhat in doubt as to the views of their own Church on many points, or what support they have from Scripture or from reason.

The chief cause of this undoubtedly is that Unitarians have no authoritative creed which it is obligatory upon them to accept.

Nevertheless, there are certain fundamental principles generally accepted among them, and certain common doctrinal beliefs which grow out of these, which are nearly the same in all their churches. Practically, there is no wider divergence of opinions among Unitarians than among the denominations that have a creed.

What, then, are the principles and beliefs commonly held by Unitarians? Among fundamental principles may be mentioned: —

1. The duty of truth-seeking. Unitarians believe in the obligation, and consequently the right, of free inquiry. It is only by free inquiry that truth can be sifted out

from error. If we have no intelligent reason for our faith, but accept it merely on the authority of some church, council, or synod, we have no faith of our own, properly speaking, any more than the parrot that repeats the phrase taught to it.

2. In this search for truth, Unitarians start with a faith that God's creation was not meant to deceive us as to itself, and that our God-given reason and conscience are to be taken as the guides of our belief and the judges of what is true.

3. As we claim it to be the right of every man to judge for himself as to what is true, we believe in giving the same liberty and toleration to every one else. It is God alone who has the right to judge men for their form of faith. In September, 1894, at the fifteenth meeting of the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, it was unanimously declared, and placed in the preamble of the constitution, that "nothing in this constitution is to be regarded as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and practical aims."

4. Unitarians believe in the spiritual nature of religion. True worship does not consist in ceremonies or repetitions of texts or the acceptance of doctrines, but only in the righteous, trustful, and reverent life and pure and consecrated character.

5. Unitarians believe in the unchangeableness of spiritual laws. The same moral laws and conditions that rule on earth must rule in heaven, and that which would be unjust or tyrannical in a man cannot proceed from divine justice and benevolence.

6. A sixth principle with Unitarians is discipleship to Jesus Christ. The officially declared object of the oldest Unitarian organization in America, the American Uni-

tarian Association, is "the diffusion of pure Christianity." The National Conference bears as its title The National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches; and in the preamble which it adopted in September, 1894, by a unanimous vote it declared that the churches united in it "accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man." We recognize Jesus as our spiritual master and teacher; and we look, therefore, for our Christian authority and the knowledge of what Christianity is, not to the Old Testament or the writings of Paul or Augustine or Calvin, but to the words and instructions of Jesus himself.

Such are the fundamental principles of thought which Unitarians take with them in their inquiries, and from them they reach in general the following common doctrinal beliefs: —

1. Unitarians believe in God as the life and maker of all things; the conscious, intelligent, holy Spirit, who is present in all that is. Unitarians believe this God to be one person, not three persons who in some mysterious way are yet one. They reject the doctrine of the Trinity as self-contradictory, incomprehensible, perplexing, and unscriptural. No such word as "Trinity" is to be found in the Bible; and the doctrine is nowhere plainly stated except in the passage in the First Epistle of John, fifth chapter and seventh verse, about the three holy witnesses, which the revisers of the New Testament have now dropped from the text, because it was not a part of the original Greek text. (See the Revised New Testament.)

Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles says anywhere in the New Testament that there are three persons in the Godhead. The doctrine of the Trinity has to be built up, as its own advocates freely confess, out of mere

hints, suggestions, and implications skilfully united together by theologians. It is argued — *e.g.*, from the text, "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" — that, as the three are mentioned together, they all must be equally divine. One might as well say that the elect angels are persons of the Godhead, because in 1 Timothy v. 21 they are mentioned with God and Christ, in a similar way, as holy witnesses. It is argued that Christ is God because he says, "I and my Father are one." But not only does the passage in which this occurs show that Christ referred to a unity of purpose and spirit — not of nature and substance — but the parallel passage, where he prays (John xvii. 21) that his disciples may be one with him, even as he is one with God, shows conclusively that he did not mean by this oneness with God to claim an equality in rank and nature with the Supreme.

The Unitarian idea of God, moreover, is not that of a monarch who rules arbitrarily, as he pleases, but of one who, as Jesus taught, is a loving and impartial and merciful Father, who has no favorites nor respect of persons, who does not select some to be saved and pass over others, leaving them to "eternal damnation, to the praise of his glorious justice"; but Unitarians believe in a God who cares with an all-embracing loving-kindness for all his children, high and low, bond and free, Jew and Gentile, Christian and heathen. His Fatherly Providence extends to all ages, churches, races, kindred, and nations, without invidious distinction or intermission or pretermission.

2. Unitarians believe in Jesus as the founder of Christianity, the great teacher of spiritual truth, and the model of the holy life. But we cannot accept him as very God or equal to the heavenly Father. However much of the

divine was manifested through him, as through all saintly souls, whom likewise the apostle John calls "sons of God" (1 John iii. 1), Jesus was clearly, as he repeatedly affirmed, subordinate to the Father. "The Father is greater than I" (John xiv. 28). "I can of myself do nothing" (John v. 30). "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). There are two hundred and forty texts in the New Testament which in a more or less similar way indicate this subordination of Christ to the Father in heaven. While we reverence Christ with the highest reverence we can give to any human being, we do not hold it justifiable to worship or pray to him. For we find that Christ, both by word and example, taught us to worship and pray only to "Our Father who art in heaven." So sensitive was he to the wrong of any approach to worship of himself instead of God that he rebuked the young ruler who addressed him as "Good Master," reminding him that "none is good save one, even God" (Luke xviii. 19). The Trinitarian explanation that Christ possessed a double nature, which enabled him to make these assertions in his human nature although they would not apply to his divine nature, Unitarians reject, both as destitute of evidence and as attributing to Christ a duplicity of speech not only incompatible with the perfect righteousness which constitutes the distinction of Jesus Christ, but inconsistent even with common honesty.

3. Unitarians believe in the Holy Spirit, not as the third person in the Godhead, but as the name for God's spiritual influence in the hearts of men. This Holy Spirit is not something confined to Palestine or the Bible times, but enlightens all religious souls everywhere.

4. Unitarians reverence the Bible as containing the Word of God, but not as, therefore, in every part infalli-

ble. It is the most venerable fountain of spiritual instruction which we have; but, even while it communicates the will of God and his dealings with men in olden time, it does so in words that came through fallible minds and tongues. It should not, therefore, be made an oracle in history, science, or chronology. It has a more divine mission — to touch the conscience and to draw the soul to God.

5. Salvation, in the Unitarian view, depends not upon being immersed or confirmed, or becoming a regular church member or undergoing some peculiar emotional experience, but on the formation of the godly character and the leading of a sincere, noble, and righteous life. The only true Christian is the one whose spirit is Christ-like, full of purity, charity, truth, and love; and no soul is really saved till it escapes from the grasp of all meanness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, and low selfishness.

Regeneration is no mystical emotional experience, but our own voluntary development of larger manhood, stricter integrity, and an ampler love. Neither faith alone nor works alone will effect this, but the work that is inspired by faith, and which ripens the character that is at once the fruit of the past and the root and guarantee of future usefulness and righteous life.

6. Unitarians believe in the dignity of human nature, not in the total depravity or total disarrangement of man's being. Men are by nature children of God, not of Satan: objects of God's love, not his wrath. The doctrine of the fall of man in Adam and the failure of God's noblest work is a doctrine that does not honor or justify the Creator, but dishonors him. We acknowledge that the nature of man has suffered from the sins and inherited evil propensities of past ages; but it has been elevated and blessed, even more, by the virtues and inherited good tendencies of those whose blood fills our veins. The path

of man has not been a downward, but an upward one. Humanity is still very imperfect, but it is slowly and surely advancing to higher things.

7. To obtain forgiveness for those sins that all men more or less commit, there is needed only true repentance and the sincere reform that shows the fruit of a new life. We see no necessity for any purchase of salvation for man by Christ or any substitution of Christ's righteousness in place of the sinner's. The idea that God, before he will pardon the penitent, must have some innocent person to suffer in his stead, is held by Unitarians to be a libel on the divine Fatherhood. We believe that God is not less kind and merciful and ready to pardon than any earthly parent, and we appeal to Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son as proof that the only Christian doctrine of atonement is that of a free and full forgiveness of the sinner as soon as he turns his face to the heavenly Father and desires to live again as a true and obedient son.

Unitarians, therefore, reject altogether the doctrine of the vicarious atonement, in which Christ suffers as a substitute for our guilty race. Christ reconciles not an unwilling God to man, but only the unwilling man to the ever-loving God.

8. Unitarians look upon heaven and hell, not as places of bliss or misery into which souls are to be thrust by angelic officers, but as states or conditions of the souls. Our fate in the next world is determined by no arbitrary edict, but is the natural outgrowth of our life in this. Each one makes for himself his own heaven or hell, and carries it with him wherever he goes.

How long shall the punishment of the wicked last? Unitarians do not venture to dogmatize on this point, but they think that all things suggest another chance for even the most sinful of souls. The only object of the divine punishment is the repentance and reformation of

the transgressor. And the first moment a transgressor repents and seeks to lead a new life there is no longer any obstacle on the part of God to such reform; but, on the contrary, there will be joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth in the future life as in this, and glad acceptance of him again into God's favor. So far from this earthly life being the only probation time, Unitarians regard every hour of eternity as a probation for the next hour, and an opportunity for every soul to become somewhat nobler and purer, and thereby to enter on some truer and more heavenly happiness than at any previous hour.

Such, in brief, are the principles and beliefs of Unitarians. The faith is usually considered a heresy of these modern days, but Unitarians themselves consider it the oldest kind of Christianity. For it is the kind found in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Lord's Prayer, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and in the rest of Christ's teaching. It was the kind that prevailed in the first two centuries after Christ's death.

The so-called Apostles' Creed, the rule of faith during the early Christian centuries, has nothing in it implying the coequality of Christ with God the Father, nor does it mention a Trinity in Unity. Clement, Polycarp, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius — all the early Church Fathers, in short — give testimony that the accepted doctrine of the first three centuries was that the Father was the only Supreme God, and that Christ's being was a created, subordinate, and derived being — one who acted as the instrument and messenger of God the Father. As Justin Martyr took care to point out, in speaking of the divine commission given to Jesus, "There is a Lord of the Lord Jesus, being his Father and God, and the cause of his existence." One of the early advocates of a Trinity was Tertullian; but he himself testifies that *the greater*

part of believers were startled at his theory as an innovation, and objected to it as dividing the Unity of God. And even in the next century, when Athanasius championed so stoutly the coequality of the Son with the Father, the well-known Church Father Gregory Nazianzen has recorded that, at first, "Athanasius *stood alone, or with a very few.*" The first victory of the Trinitarian innovators was not gained till 325, at the Council of Nicæa, when the Son was declared of the same substance as the Father. But it was not ventured as yet to assert this consubstantiality and personality as belonging to the Holy Ghost. During the next half-century one-half of the Church was Arian. It held the Son of God to be derived, and subordinate in rank, and similar — not identical — in nature with God, the Father, and this party often preponderated, and six times condemned and banished Athanasius as a heretic. In 380 Theodosius, the emperor, drove the Arians by force out of the churches of the East, and at the head of his legions installed Gregory Nazianzen, the bishop of the Nicene party in control of Constantinople. To legalize these violent proceedings (says Prof. Carl Hase, "History of the Christian Church," Sect. 105). a council was called, composed of only one hundred and fifty bishops, chosen under the arbitrary dictation of the emperor. By this partisan fragment of the Church, which is called the Council of Constantinople, 381 A.D., the Holy Spirit was also proclaimed as coequal with the Father and Son, and as proceeding from the Father. The article which declared that the Holy Spirit also proceeded from the Son (the *Filioque* clause), was incorporated into the confession of faith by a local synod at Toledo in 589. The present orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, that of the Westminster Confession and the evangelic creeds generally, was first clearly championed in the Church by Saint Augustine at the close of the fourth

century. And Saint Augustine has put on record his confession that "he was in the dark until he found the true doctrine concerning the divine Word (*i.e.*, the incarnate Son of God), in a Latin translation of some *Platonic* writings." It was from pagan philosophy, not from the gospel, that it was derived. But even yet it was not *formally indorsed* by any *public and general council* in the Christian Church till the time of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

In the light of such facts, are not Unitarians quite justified in declaring with the great church historian, Neander (Vol. I., p. 571, "History of the Christian Religion"), himself an orthodox believer, that this doctrine of the Trinity "*does not belong to the fundamental articles of the Christian faith*, as is sufficiently evident from the fact that it is expressly held forth in no one particular passage of the New Testament"?

It was only thus gradually and after many centuries that the simple gospel of Christ was overlaid by these inventions of theologians and ecclesiastics. The great religious reform needed to-day is to slough off these artificial metaphysical accretions from Christianity, and to return to the simple principles of love to God and love to man which Christ originally taught.

To bring about such a reformation and simplification of Christianity is the aim of Unitarianism. The great want of the times is a religion that shall not only be full of faith and reverence, but of reason and common sense, in harmony with the teachings of natural science, the needs of the human heart, and the dictates of the conscience. Such a faith Unitarians present to the world in the liberal Christianity in which so many of the noblest minds of modern days have found comfort.

Among the representative theologians and preachers who have belonged or still belong to its fellowship in

America are such names as William Ellery Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Orville Dewey, Henry W. Bellows, Theodore Parker, Frederic H. Hedge, Robert Collyer, William H. Furness, Ezra S. Gannett, George Putnam, William Henry Channing, Thomas Starr King, Horatio Stebbins, Grindall Reynolds, Minot J. Savage, Octavius B. Frothingham, Cyrus A. Bartol, and Samuel R. Calthrop.

Among philanthropists and reformers, the following have held or still hold our Unitarian faith, namely, Joseph Tuckerman, Dr. Samuel G. Howe, Dorothea L. Dix, Peter Cooper, Samuel J. May, Henry Bergh, Abbott Lawrence, Enoch Pratt, Elizabeth P. Peabody, Charles Barnard, John Pierpont, Dorman B. Eaton, Edward Everett Hale, and William H. Baldwin.

Among educators and distinguished leaders in our universities and colleges who have been connected with our churches or are still in affiliation with us may be named the following: The presidents of Harvard University since the early part of the century, namely, J. T. Kirkland, Josiah Quincy, Jared Sparks, James Walker, C. C. Felton, Thomas Hill, and Charles W. Eliot; Horace Mann, founder of the American public school system and president of Antioch College; Jonas G. Clark, founder of Clark University; Chancellor William G. Eliot of Washington University; Professors Francis J. Child, Andrews Norton, Edward Channing, Francis Bowen, Ezra Abbot, Andrew P. Peabody, George R. Noyes, Charles Eliot Norton, and James K. Hosmer.

Among our poets, the following have been of our faith: William Cullen Bryant, Henry W. Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Julia Ward Howe, Helen Hunt Jackson, Samuel Longfellow, and Edward R. Sill. John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet, also accepted the Unitarian views in theology.

Among historians, we enumerate the following names as on our roll: George Bancroft, J. Lothrop Motley, William H. Prescott, George Ticknor, John G. Palfrey, and Francis Parkman.

Among scientific workers, we may name the following in the past and present as holding our views: Nathaniel Bowditch; Louis Agassiz, Benjamin Pierce, Maria Mitchell, John W. Draper, Asaph Hall, Wolcott Gibbs, Joseph Lovering, and Jeffries Wyman.

Among distinguished authors, artists, and actors, we may name Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edwin P. Whipple, George William Curtis, William Ware, Margaret Fuller, Lydia Maria Child, Louisa M. Alcott, Catharine Sedgwick, Sylvester Judd, Henry Thoreau, Christopher P. Cranch, James T. Fields, Bayard Taylor, Thomas W. Higginson, Parke Godwin, William R. Alger, Charlotte Cushman, John Weiss, Samuel Johnson, John S. Dwight, Edmund C. Stedman, Harriet Hosmer, John W. Chadwick, William C. Gannett, and Charles F. Dole.

Among statesmen and public men, four Presidents of the United States have been of our faith; namely, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, and Millard Fillmore.

Among United States senators, the following well-known names may be enumerated: Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Edward Everett, William E. Chandler, George F. Hoar, Justin D. Morrill, Hannibal Hamlin, and John P. Hale.

Among jurists we may name the following justices of Supreme Courts, either National or State: John Marshall, Joseph Story, Samuel F. Miller, Theophilus Parsons, Lemuel Shaw, George T. Bigelow, John Wells, Walbridge A. Field, E. Rockwood Hoar, Benjamin F. Thomas, and John Lowell.

Among governors of States: John H. Clifford, John A. Andrew, Alexander H. Bullock, George S. Boutwell, Thomas Talbot, George D. Robinson, Oliver Ames, Roger Wolcott, Charles H. Bell, Alphonso Taft, George Hoadly, John T. Bagley.

Among distinguished men in public life or the business world in various posts we name: Benjamin Franklin, Fisher Ames, Charles Francis Adams, John D. Long (Secretary of the Navy), Nathaniel Thayer, Moses H. Grinnell, A. A. Low, Augustus Hemenway, Henry P. Kidder, George W. McCrary, Carroll D. Wright, George C. Perkins, and Horace Davis.

Among English Unitarians, the following names are those of well-known authors: John Milton, John Locke, Joseph Priestley, James Martineau, J. Estlin Carpenter, Stopford A. Brooke, Philip H. Wicksteed, Francis W. Newman, Mrs. Barbauld, Frances Power Cobbe, Mrs. Gaskell, Sir John Bowring, and Sarah Flower Adams.

In other lines of service we find in the Unitarian fellowship a great host of distinguished names, among which we have space only for a few, such as Isaac Newton, Miss Florence Nightingale, Miss Mary Carpenter, John Pounds, Jeremy Bentham, Sir Charles Lyell, Dr. William B. Carpenter, Mary Somerville, and Octavia Hill.

To these may be added the names of the following eminent men on the continent of Europe who have held or still hold our faith: Mazzini, the Italian patriot and reformer; Emilio Castelar, the Republican leader in Spain; Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot; Albert Réville, Athanase Coquerel, Professor Kuenen, Professor Schenkel, and Professor Carl Hase.

Is not a faith that has received the adherence of so many of the first minds of the age worth inquiring into?

Take down your New Testament, reader, and study the record of Christ's teaching in the Four Gospels, and see

if you find there the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, vicarious atonement, infallible inspiration, salvation without personal holiness, or the total depravity of human nature. Then ask yourself, If these doctrines are not taught by Christ, what claim have they on your allegiance? Have they any more support from reason or experience or physical science? And, if they have no satisfactory evidence in either Scripture or reason, why do you continue to accept such creeds?

Shut out the disturbing influence of your inherited prepossessions, and give the subject a candid inquiry, and I do not fear the result. If Unitarians are not yet strong numerically, may they not comfort themselves by reading what Louis Kossuth, the great Hungarian patriot, not long ago said to Prof. John Kovács, of Klausenburg, "The Unitarian faith is the only faith that has a future, the only one that can influence the intelligent and interest the indifferent"?

[No. 117]

AN INTRODUCTION

TO

UNITARIANISM.

BY

REV. SAMUEL M. CROTHERS, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

AN

INTRODUCTION TO UNITARIANISM.

THERE are many men and women of high moral purpose and of religious spirit who are outside the churches. They are interested in philanthropy, in education, and in all that concerns the welfare of the community; but they are unable to accept the creeds which are commonly made the conditions of church membership. Many such persons are unaware that there exists any church to which they may belong without giving up their freedom of thought. I wish on behalf of the Unitarian Church to address the isolated liberal thinker. It will be more simple for me to speak to a person rather than to a class. In order that we may at once come to an understanding, let me see if I can tell

WHAT YOU ARE.

You had been educated in an evangelical church where you had been taught what is commonly called The Plan of Salvation. The foundation of this system lay in the belief that God had revealed his full will in the Bible, which was a book of infallible truth. It told how the world was created, how man was created innocent but fell into sin, how at last the Second Person of the Trinity took upon himself our humanity, was born, suffered, and died that those who believe on Him might be saved. All those who did not believe on Him must suffer eternal misery under the wrath of God.

It was through no will of your own that you doubted first one and then another of these doctrines. The first

doctrine to fade away was that of the eternal punishment of unbelievers. The proof texts in the Bible seemed to teach this, and yet it seemed so horribly unjust, so contradictory to the thought that God is love, that you felt that there must be some mistake in the reasoning that would shut out a great part of mankind from all hope. You had heard that there were heretics called Universalists who stoutly denied the doctrine. You were not ready to become a Universalist, but you were glad when your own minister quietly ignored the dogma.

After a while you saw that there were other mistakes in the system which had been taught you. You got some knowledge of geology, and you saw that it is impossible any longer to take the account of the creation in Genesis literally. A little reflection showed that the whole account of the fall of man must be given up. At first you tried to think that this had no effect on what seemed more essential, — salvation through the blood of Christ. But, after a while, you perceived that the whole plan of redemption depended on the orthodox view of the fall of man. Then you began to study the Bible anew. You asked, Does the Bible claim to be infallible? If it does, is the claim verified? You discovered that modern scholars have found many undoubted mistakes in it. Along with the loftiest thoughts they have found many human errors. This was, you learned, not a matter of conjecture but one of plain fact.

If the Bible is not infallible can the appeal to proof texts really prove anything? Is it any longer possible to rest content with a doctrine merely because it's "scriptural"? Common-sense answered: No.

At this time you received a further shock, when on seeking light on the popular creeds, you discovered that those who defended them often played fast and loose with words. When you discovered that a creed might

be signed with mental reservations, you felt that you were being trifled with. It was all so different from the transparent candor with which men of science state the results of their researches. About this time the reports of a "heresy trial" made you look upon the church with a feeling almost of disgust. A scholar, for stating the conclusions to which his studies led him, was haled before an ecclesiastical court as if he had been guilty of a crime. The church, you said, is an enemy to the truth-seeking spirit, and so you turned away from it. Since then you have been an outsider. You have taken an interest in philanthropic associations; you have read good books; you have given much thought to your own home. In many ways you are conscious that you are more religious in your inner thought than you had been before; but you have no church.

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

No. Nobody prefers being "an outsider." At first you rather enjoyed it. It was a fine thing to live in the open. You felt only compassion for those who were shut in by a roof. But now you are willing to confess that it is sometimes chilly and always a little lonely, where you are. You begin to realize the feeling of the Ancient Mariner when, after being "alone on the wide, wide sea," he longed for the fellowship of religion.

> Oh sweeter than the marriage feast,
> 'T is sweeter far to me,
> To walk together to the kirk
> With a goodly company.
> To walk together to the kirk
> And all together pray,
> While each to the great Father bends—
> Old men and babes and loving friends,
> And youths and maidens gay.

It is that sense of "walking together" that attracts you in the ideal of a church. How beautiful it is to belong to a society based not on wealth, or social distinction, or self-interest, but only on common human needs and aspirations! And when you think of your own children your position as an "outsider" seems to you still more unsatisfactory. The church of your childhood was narrow, and you outgrew it; but there were some things you learned there which you have never outgrown. There is a sense of the sanctity of all life, that you have carried with you, and which is the best thing you have to-day. You want to communicate that to your children, and you find it is no easy thing. You need the help of others, you need the proper atmosphere and environment.

And there are occasions of joy and sorrow when you go back to the church. They are the times when you need the sacramental touch to give any meaning to life.

Of another lack you have become conscious, even in your good works. It is the lack of unity. A great many good people are busily engaged in doing a great many kinds of good things. Some are visiting the sick, some are endeavoring to reform politics, some are setting examples of noble integrity in business. How may they be brought together, so that they may encourage one another and present a solid front against the forces of evil? How may they find one common inspiration and feel the glow which comes from fellowship? As it is, they are often lonely and discouraged; how may they be united into one triumphant body?

THE CHURCH TO WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO BELONG.

That in the church which has irritated and alienated you has been its dogmatism, its narrowness, its traditionalism. That which attracts you is the idea of a brother-

hood based on common human needs and aspirations. If the Church could only be made to give up the intrusive attempt to dictate a set of opinions to its members, and give itself to the work of developing each one in his own best life, and encouraging each one in his own endeavors to realize the ideal, what a noble institution it might become! A university needs no formal creed, the love of sound learning is a sufficient bond. Why should not a church be united in the same way? Instead of being a union of those who have the same opinions, let it be the union of those who desire to cultivate to the fullest their moral and spiritual natures, and to share with others the good which they may have discovered. Such a church could have no fear of heresy. One could not really "outgrow" it, for its very purpose is to afford the necessary helps to the fullest individual development. Such a church in any community would afford a meeting-place and a home for all those who were interested in the betterment of the common life. It would, at the same time, be a refuge for the lonely and the discouraged. To "belong to a church" would be the evidence, not of sectarian zeal, but of the broadest humanitarian sympathy.

DO YOU KNOW THAT OTHERS ARE WORKING FOR JUST SUCH AN IDEAL?

Read these words of William Ellery Channing:

"I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky, in the broad light, looking far and wide, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears, and following truth meekly, but resolutely, however arduous and solitary the path in which she leads."

Channing, you perceive, was willing, if need be, to walk alone. Happily, however, it was not necessary for him to do so, for he found "a goodly company" ready

to walk with him. This was the real meaning of the Unitarian movement of which Channing was the honored leader.

It will be worth your while to look up the history of this Unitarian movement. You will find Unitarianism has passed through all the phases of thought or feeling which you have passed through, and is now facing substantially the same ideals. It began in the strictest form of Calvinism. These churches in their search for truth have been reluctantly compelled to give up first one and then another of their inherited doctrines — the Trinity, the fall of man, the atonement, the eternal punishment of the unbelievers, at last the infallible authority of the Bible. If you take the trouble you may find out the reasons which forced them to each step. This side of the development was negative, so that Unitarians have often felt themselves to be cut off from the larger fellowship they have desired. But in the exercise of their freedom they have come upon that which has been positive and inspiring.

The dignity and worth of human nature ; the sacredness of the moral law ; the wonderfulness of the tendency to growth and progress; the unity to be discerned in all good things; the prophecies which this present life gives of larger and more perfect life — these are the themes which Unitarian poets and preachers have found most inspiring. All these thoughts find their natural centre in the thought of God. Unitarians do not attempt to define the Divine Being, but, following the various lines of beauty and truth in the Universe, they find them converging in one Divine Reality. They do not find it necessary to formulate any creed to which all must assent because they believe that the natural impulse of the human soul is religious. Each age and each nation has made its own picture of the Highest and Best. We are, by the same

necessity, making our mental pictures, but the reality must always be greater than our thoughts. To the Unitarian, worship is just this continual reaching out toward the perfect life. The freer we are in our thought and spirit, the more religious we are, if we only keep up the search for that which is beyond.

As to Jesus, Unitarians find it impossible to think of him as Almighty God, and after a careful study of the records they find the proof of many of the marvels attributed to him inadequate. But as they read the New Testament they are thrilled by his words and his life. Jesus teaches that religion consists in perfect Love — love to God and man. He teaches that religion is natural, its most perfect type being the little child. He teaches that there is no need of a mediator between God and man, for a man may go to God just as a child goes to his father. He teaches that religion is a matter not of tradition, but of personal insight, for "the pure in heart see God." He teaches that the true way to learn is by doing. "He that doeth his will shall know of the doctrine."

Such thoughts as these do not need to be enforced by any dogma of infallibility, they need only to be uttered to meet with response. In these words of Jesus, rather than in any doctrine about him, Unitarians rest their faith. Jesus is to them the pioneer of a perfectly free and spiritual religion.

In another way Unitarians have found inspirations which more than make up for what they have lost in breaking away from traditional doctrines. The great social movements of our time have enforced, as never before, the lesson that we are bound together by ties that cannot be broken. We are literally members of one body. Civilization itself is dependent on a religious spirit. We cannot have a true nation without having men and women to whom duty is something sacred. The attempt

to build up the state, the school, the family, brings the realization of religion as something of large public interest. From this standpoint the idea of the Church comes to have a new dignity and importance. It is not an institution standing apart from the state, as if it belonged to another sphere. It has a necessary function in the community; it must train its members to serve the state in the noblest ways.

To know the full thought of modern Unitarians on the varied themes of religion you are referred not to a creed but to the writings of representatives of the faith from Channing and Parker to the present. In reading, you must take for granted one thing: though members of a church, these men are as free as you are. They do not desire to impose their opinions on you, only to help you, if possible, in your search for truth. They welcome honest inquiry: in their church fellowship there is room for honest difference of opinion. They hold with that eminent Unitarian, John Milton, that

> "To be still searching what we do not know by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it, this is the golden rule in theology as in arithmetic, and makes the best harmony in the church, not the formal and outward union of cold, neutral, and inwardly divided minds."

I have attempted merely to give an introduction to Unitarianism, just as I should introduce two friends who ought to know each other. I fancy that you who have thought your own way out of orthodoxy will find little that is startling in the negative side of Unitarian literature. I think, however, that you may find encouragement in the discovery that what to you has been a lonely way has been travelled by others in "a goodly company." You may find inspiration, too, in learning that a movement that has always been loyal to the principle of free-

dom, and which has declared that doubt is not a sin but the condition of real thinking, has not ended in mere negation, but in a cheerful faith. When you come to examine it you will find that that faith is not very different from that to which you yourself have come.

Is not this something of importance to you? Here are people who are actually organized and at work, endeavoring to realize the ideal of a church of freedom and brotherly kindness, without bigotry and without superstition — the very church of which you had dreamed. They would be stronger for your co-operation; would not you be happier for their fellowship?

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Tracts descriptive of Unitarian principles, doctrines, and methods, are sent free to any who desire to know what Liberal Christianity stands for and works for. A list of these free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional, and practical works, will be sent to all who apply. All religious books by Unitarian authors are kept on sale, and will be sent on receipt of price. A list of such books, with prices, will be furnished upon request.

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[No. 118.]

THE

POWER OF JESUS' LIFE.

BY

REV. GRINDALL REYNOLDS, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration.

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association.*)

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE POWER OF JESUS' LIFE.

Believe me for the very works' sake. — John xiv. 11.

A year ago I read Mommsen's History of Ancient Rome. His allusions to the period of its early kings greatly impressed me. Of that period we have absolutely no authentic history. So far as the story is handed down in writing, it is hopelessly legendary and mythical. Are we, then, destitute of all trustworthy information? By no means. We learn, he says, what we know, not from historical tradition, but by means of inference from the institutions known to have existed soon after. The structure of society, the laws of the state, the religious customs, the family relation, art, architecture, — all these, which we find fully formed and in action when first trustworthy annals came to be, do testify of a civilization and development governing and unfolding ere trustworthy annals were. We believe and know much of those far distant times, not on account of the record, but for the sake of the works, which abide. It is like the transformations of our planet. No account of these has been handed down. None could be. But in every tilted layer of rock, in every petrifaction of tree or animal, the geologist reads the sure story.

What is true of Roman history might be true of any other history. It is supposable that in some remote

future all annals of our own country prior to the adoption of the Constitution in 1789 might be lost. Yet I can conceive of an acute scholar, like our historian, pointing out to the curious reader three thousand years hence what varied influences the Puritan, the Cavalier, the Huguenot, poured into our common life, and how careful study, with little or no printed evidence, might put the long struggle with the savage, the successful uprising of the Revolution, and the great argument by which a loose confederacy became a nation, among well-ascertained facts. All this would be possible, because every unknown past leaves behind works which live and act in a known present, and reveal the quality of that past.

Why should we not apply this historic principle to Jesus' life? That is, why should we not use his own language with a wide and permanent application? Sure I am that, if we could get at the core and heart of the faith and reverence of Christendom to-day, we should find that these qualities do not rest simply upon the fact that four short biographies of Jesus were written centuries ago. Such reverence and faith rest rather on the ineffaceable consciousness of mankind that Jesus has written his life and power in fair and noble characters upon more than eighteen hundred years of human experience; and that he is doing the same thing to-day, and here, and everywhere. Stating it in Gospel phrase, men believe in him and submit their lives to his influence for his works' sake. Manuscripts may be altered, or the history and formation of them may be concealed by the mists of a deep antiquity. But moral and spiritual force and truth, put into the life of the race, abide, and testify of their source and giver.

This historic principle — for it has certainly become

that — has peculiar worth and helpfulness in our own time. We live in a period of questioning. Doubt has in many minds risen to the elevation of an august virtue. There are those who would put after every statement of Christian history an interrogation point. Certainly I cannot in any fulness agree with this extreme unbelief. Sometimes it seems as irrational as the wildest credulity, and to demand of Christian annals what it would demand of nothing else. When the last historic inquiry shall have been made, and the last words of criticism spoken, I suspect that we shall be compelled to believe as much as this: that the Gospels were written by persons who had an intimate connection with the planting of Christianity; that what they wrote they wrote from honest conviction; and finally, and most important, that what they wrote unconsciously reveals a character larger, loftier, and more spiritual than their own.

Suppose now that we entertain all the questions, consider all the doubts, put the interrogation point wherever an objector desires, and as often as he desires it. Have we lost Jesus? Has that influence, so strong and tender, so attractive and inspiring, taken its final departure? Certainly not. Real works last. Genuine spiritual principles and influences are enduring blessings. Some of the interesting details of that great career, as the historian says of Roman annals, may pass away. But the main stress and power of the life cannot pass away. It has become one of the forces in the moral universe. It is this reality of the Christ that has given him a permanent place in human interest. Great changes of opinion come with the years. Just criticisms in time are universally accepted. So the outward form is in flux. But no change affects the sway of a life which is genuine, and which communi-

cates enduring spiritual help and inspiration. Men doubt theories; they believe facts.

What did Jesus give the world to be a perpetual witness that he once lived, and that he was worthy of the love and reverence with which men have remembered him? Let us say, first, an ideal life. An ideal life so embedded in human consciousness that men cannot away with it. No matter now about the biographies; no matter about the traditions; no matter what you believe or do not believe of these. As much as this is certain. In the earliest Christian years of which there is a sure record, a new and higher conception of holy living meets you. The true man, it says, is he who is one in heart and purpose with that infinite greatness we call the Heavenly Father. The true man is he who within is pure and just. The true man is he who in his secret soul loves his fellow-man. In this conception all goodness is first inward, afterward outward; first of the heart, then of the hand and the conduct. It is a fresh and lofty conception. It did not simply express the spiritual standards of its own time. The Jewish thought of acceptable living was to pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and to hold fast to the traditions of the elders. It was hopelessly external. This conception could not have come from the Roman, — whose virtue even meant courage, endurance, whose very morality put on the Stoic garb, whose religion was prudent and earthly. It could not have come from the Greek, — in his best estate beauty-loving and pleasure-loving, and who in later days had sunk into doubt and voluptuousness. Neither could it have come from the earlier Christians themselves; for neither they nor we have been able to reach up to that great pattern of divinest life.

The conception of true life presented to the world in

the first Christian ages demands a great soul. It bears witness that a son of God taught and lived this imperishable moral ideal. There is no other adequate explanation. In all other departments of life this is the way we have to deal with the works which an unknown past hands down. I go out into the desert which skirts Palestine. I reach the oasis where Palmyra stood. Around me, beautiful even in ruins, are the remains of temple and palace. Do I need to be told that the rude Arab, who pitches his black tent and feeds his flock beneath their shadows, did not rear them? Do not the works — these magnificent structures, that neither man's violence nor the waste of centuries has been able utterly to destroy — bear their own witness? Though there were not preserved a line of history, should we not know that once a lordlier race here lived and wrought? Even so the spiritual work rooted in man's life testifies of the worker.

Consider the immortality which cleaves to the teachings of the New Testament. Here are those wonderful parables, which have delighted and instructed sixty generations of the old and young. Read the parables of the Prodigal Son and of the Good Samaritan. How fresh and interesting they are! How applicable to the errors, needs, and duties of man to-day! No frost of age rests upon them. I doubt whether our own generation, with all its progress in science, in art, and in literature, can write one which will last half as long. Here is the Sermon on the Mount. It is a whole volume on ethics and religion, compressed into a dozen pages. Not a verse would we spare. How seriously yet how pithily it unfolds the whole philosophy and duty of true prayer! What modesty it would add to the grace of charity! With what clearness it states

and illustrates the supremacy of the heavenly over the earthly treasure! To the inwardness and depth of the better life in man, each Beatitude bears its own separate witness. No doubt a hundred thousand sermons have been written upon this first recorded sermon. A hundred thousand more may be. Yet the fountain will be unexhausted. And where shall we find profounder glimpses of man's divinest life than in the words of that Gospel of John, which Edmund Sears calls "the Heart of Christ"?

Some one says now that we are not sure of the authorship of the four Gospels, that we do not know whether they were written thirty or seventy years after the supposed death of Jesus, that we cannot tell with certainty even whether their original garb was Hebrew or Greek. We are sorry if this be so. Naturally enough, we like to be sure even of unimportant details. But the great teacher is there. He who spake as God gave him wisdom has written his mark on every page. Had but one of the great Philippics of Demosthenes come down to us, and with no certain history attached, should we not know that in Greece's extremity there spake an orator at whose feet the lovers of eloquence might wisely sit? We read the drama of "The Merchant of Venice." Very little written history tells of its author. Not a tenth part of what it records of some worthless sycophant. But how full the testimony of his works! The knowledge of the human heart, of its springs of action, of its deep fountains of human joy and sorrow, are all written there in fair, large characters. I read my Bible, and I know that Jesus walked with God; that the volume of truth and duty was to him an open book; that his words were light and life; that he must have spoken with authority, and not as the scribes.

Reflect upon the vast impulse which Christianity has been in human history. Reflect not the less upon the blessing it has been in the private life of men, — quickening their faith, comforting them in sorrow, and leading uncounted multitudes out of the fleshly life up to the ways of the spirit. All this is of common observation. For eighteen centuries this word, this life, has been a force in the personal experience, and a force in the great common life of humanity, — a stream of energy forever flowing, forever unexhausted. No one can look beneath the surface of human annals and not find it.

Then we search for the beginning of this world-wide inspiration, of this world-inclusive movement. What do we find? This. In a little despised province of Rome, probably in a despised town of this despised province, far away from the centres of power, a great word was spoken. The mighty of this world had but little respect for it. They withstood and hated it. Kings and rulers turned a deaf ear to it. Great ecclesiastical systems, strong in their organization, strong in traditional reverence, stood in its way. Even the light unbelief of the time, which was robbing so many of serious trust, did not furnish a congenial atmosphere in which to blossom and bear fruit. But in three centuries the new truth, nominally at any rate conquered the world. Men's ways of thinking, their rules of action, their best hopes for this world or the next, their dreams of a progress yet to be, their very laws, — all that makes up the basis and the texture of civilization, felt and feels its potent influence.

We all know what may be said, and said truly. There had been a long and varied preparation, Roman conquest had melted into one countless and warring principalities, so that the whole world was open to the

great-hearted missionary of the truth. The old faiths, the old rituals, were losing their power. Minds and hearts were growing more hospitable to the fresh message which had in it rationality plus life. All this no doubt is true. But in this statement one thing is lacking, — a towering personality, a soul charged with truth and sympathy, a mind and heart to be the media through which the divine life should flow into man's life. Even in material interests, great advances always demand great prophets. One does not believe that Bismarck united Germany as the watchmaker gathers into a perfect chronometer the scattered wheels and springs. But neither watch nor empire could dispense with the master hand. Much more do spiritual advances require prophets. Luther did not create the Reformation, but it would have lagged without him. John Wesley was not the whole of Methodism, but all the same it waited for his coming. So the world before Jesus' day had been all unconsciously preparing for a great fresh influx of spiritual life. But it waited for a mighty personality, a soul in whom God's spirit dwelt, — in whom was a knowledge of the truth, a love of man, and a bright vision of a nobler future. And it found all in the prophet of Galilee; and his works, seen in a better civilization, and seen in a truer form of religion, and seen in purer lives, bear witness of him. Men believe in him and cherish his influence, not simply because of what is written, but because his own wonderful personality has poured itself without stint into the world's life.

More and more I am disposed to exalt personality. The final law in all well-ordered life is the principle of truth which expresses the love and wisdom of Him who created us. That of course. But never does a principle of truth come home with such power as when it

is incarnated in living excellence. Take a simple illustration. One praises in abstract terms heroic self-sacrifice. All he says is true. Yet perchance your heart does not burn within you, and you are not stirred to noble imitation. Replace now the abstraction by an actual example. Tell the story of one who has risked all, and lost all, to save another. The virtue takes on reality. The frost around the heart melts. The fountains of the great deeps of sympathy are broken up. You admire, you reverence, you imitate.

In a large way, the remembrance of Jesus does the same thing, — changes mere assent into earnest acceptance. That remembrance may have been connected with mistaken convictions. Nevertheless, the disposition of good and wise men to keep his memory green is an eminently healthy tendency. It proposes to bring men into contact with a personality which has in all the Christian years proved to be full of spiritual powers. One can hardly estimate the loss to the race, and to the individual, if in all the Christian centuries we could have excluded enthusiasm for Jesus' personality, and replaced it by a cool and sensible acceptance of truth, in which there was not one heart-throb.

What we need is more heart-throbs. To exclude from our lives the greatest example is to rob us of motive power. That wondrous life has filled the Christian ages with its work. It has flooded the Christian consciousness with its ideal of holy living. What most of us need is not more knowledge, but more warmth, more zeal, a clearer conviction of the reality and worth of the better life. We get this warmth, we get this enthusiasm, we get this vision of a diviner life, to no little degree from the example of the saints, and especially from that example which has led so many souls into higher paths and itself lighted the way.

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[No. 119]

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

BY

REV. HERBERT H. MOTT.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

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WHY GO TO CHURCH?

It Will Make You Happier.

We are happy when we have good things to think about. There are good things in business, work, politics, sport, — but, the *best things* we can find only in brave lives, great deeds, the experiences of those who have conquered temptation and difficulty, who have suffered and have not despaired.

These best things the Church supplies. Go there, and hear about them. You will be *happier* for it.

It Will Enable You to Endure Misfortune.

How can a man endure misfortune, with courage and tranquillity, unless he has hope? How can he have hope unless he has a firm faith in the overruling providence of God? To most of us such faith does not come of itself. It needs instilling into the mind and cultivating in the heart.

How can a firm faith in God be instilled into the mind and cultivated in the heart, except by hearing about God, and thinking about him, and praying to him? Where is this possible, in any regular and systematic way, except in the church?

It Will Enable You to Resist Temptation.

Every one meets with temptation. What is wanted is the power to resist, the resolution to say no. Education, knowledge, intellectual ability — alone and of themselves — will certainly not give us this power. They may, indeed, be aids to evil. They may be used as instruments of self-indulgence. They may, and often do, increase a man's temptations.

There is only one influence that can be depended upon, — the influence of a sincere belief in God. He who really believes that God is "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet," and that to him the secrets of all hearts are open, possesses within himself a power over temptation well-nigh invincible.

Is it not to be desired, then, that every man should cultivate such belief? What likelihood is there of his doing this, if he never goes to church?

It Will Enable You to Establish Personal Relations With God.

The church is not only a place of instruction, it is a place in which you come in contact with the living and active influences of God, under conditions not to be found elsewhere.

Among such influences, under such conditions, attributes and faculties are quickened in you, which otherwise would remain dormant, and gifts are bestowed upon you, which otherwise would be withheld. This is a consequence of the peculiar nature of the relationship between man and God.

It is a relationship not like that of the machine and the machinist, the watch and the watchmaker; for the machine and the watch, having been put together, are

set going or wound up, and then left to themselves. It is more like that of a tree to the soil whence strength is drawn unceasingly; or, a closer analogy still is the relationship between offspring and parent. The child possesses a certain independence, yet obtains sympathy, and guidance, and help from intercourse with the parent; and the measure of such help may be enlarged or lessened, may be made of greater or of smaller effectiveness, by the voluntary acts of the child. The parent is glad to guide, and counsel, and comfort, and aid; but the child's attitude, its self-confident waywardness, too often hinders; and thus many a misery, many a tribulation, is endured, which might have been escaped.

And so it is between the Creator and his creatures, between the heavenly Parent and his human offspring. God wishes you to meet his demands, to fulfil his law, and He wishes, therefore, to provide you with the power and insight necessary to enable you to fulfil it. The forces of God are always influencing us to this end. But they can do so much more effectively when we cease to offer active opposition. The ordinary attitude of mind, engrossed with worldly cares, does offer active opposition. It is of the utmost importance for our moral welfare, that, at certain times and seasons at least, this opposition should cease, and the forces of God be allowed freely to flow in.

Any one who has again and again passed before a noble statue or a fine picture, has become aware, gradually, of the growth in his mind of new perceptions and faculties. Unconsciously to himself, his capacity to see beauty has been enlarged by exposure to the influences of the beautiful object. And in the same way, by coming repeatedly under religious influences, at regular intervals, over a long period of time, a change is wrought

in the texture and fabric of the mind. New faculties are awakened and new susceptibilities brought into being. We become able to see and hear what we could not see and hear before. "Be still, and know that I am God," says the prophet. "The highest knowledge, the true light, is *given* to us, not gained by us." We can, however, aid the process of intercommunication between Heaven and earth. We can remove obstructions, but we can also attract to ourselves divine influences. While these influences will act upon a man, will enlighten him, will benefit him, when he is simply passive, they will do so in a greater degree when he meets them half way, when he turns his mind and heart voluntarily toward heaven, when he draws near to God in prayer.

It seems as though quietness set the house-door of the soul ajar, and as though prayer opened it wide. Power to stand firm against temptation, to be just instead of unjust, merciful instead of unmerciful, light on the way, consolation in sorrow, are always vouchsafed to him who prays, and they are not vouchsafed in anything like the same degree without prayer.

It is, therefore, an urgent necessity, that we should, at frequent intervals, place ourselves within an atmosphere of prayer. It is a sovereign remedy; it is a sweet and pleasant one; yet it demands a serious effort on our part. The practical difficulty is, for a man, amid the bustle of active life and absorbed in the anxieties of bread-winning, to make the effort, to find time, or quiet, or any of the conditions necessary, to attune the mind to prayer.

The plain and obvious and common-sense way out of the difficulty is to go to church. *There*, as nowhere else, the right conditions exist; *there*, as nowhere else, it is possible for you to comply with them. *There* you can at least rest in the mood of passive prayer, and

while you are thus stilled, the agencies of heaven will minister unto you. They will do far more for you than you can do for yourself. They will work in you a silent yet a vital change, gradually purifying your heart, invigorating your moral nature, enlightening your mind, transforming you into a new and happier being.

Substitutes for Church Going.

Can we not obtain all the Church has to give from good books, in our own homes? If the books deal with the same themes the Church deals with, and if we study them with care enough, no doubt, it is possible to obtain from them much of what the Church has to give. But, do not the conditions of the average home make such study difficult?

The temptations to read something else are pressing, and is it not common experience that nine times out of ten we yield to the temptation? The consequence is, that, though the books we read may be good ones, what we obtain from them is not the same kind of good the Church has to give.

Are not the beauties of nature an efficient substitute for the Church? Nature does much for us, contact with her gives strength and health; nevertheless her methods are those of a relentless mechanism. Her instrument is unfeeling force. It is a fallacy to fancy we can learn from her of justice, mercy, faith; that we can draw from cloud, or stream, or tree, the strength to overcome temptation or the hope that will deliver us from despair. So long as men have taken her for their sole teacher, they have remained barbarians.

It is in conquering nature, not in submitting to her, that the best in us is called forth. So, then, while intercourse with nature is invaluable, we delude our-

selves if we think we can obtain from her the same gifts the Church has to give. We need these gifts. The danger of deterioration, of retrogression, is a real one.

There is a tendency to degeneration in the blood, from which the best of us are not free. Vicious, ignoble, selfish habits of thought increase their hold on us, unless we set up a counteracting influence. The most effective one is frequent intercourse with those who are better than ourselves. He who neglects such intercourse will find himself, at the end of twelve months, on a lower level, less capable of worthy effort, more responsive to the solicitations of base things.

The Church provides a remedy. *There* we are brought in touch with great souls, with the best and worthiest examples — with objects of worship, of adoration, — which exalt the mind, purify thought, and invigorate the will.

Go to Church for the Sake of Your Country.

The Church is the solitary institution which holds men fast to the thought of an overruling Providence, which proclaims the constantly forgotten truth that justice and mercy are not things it is permitted us to take or leave, but are expressions of the imperative will of the living God. In a word, the Church keeps alive and spreads abroad the spirit of religion — the spirit which comes from belief in, and intercourse with, God. *Is not this spirit essential to patriotism?*

From Leonidas to Lincoln the moving force in every true patriot's heart has been a firm faith in God. The conquering nations are the believing nations. Oliver Cromwell took special care to get *religious* men into his army. "I raised such men," he said, "as had the fear

of God before them, as made some conscience of what they did; and, from that day forward, they were never beaten."

Is it not essential to public honesty? If every official of the State were in reality a godfearing man, would not dishonest dealing with the interests and property of the people, be a thing unknown?

Is it not essential to public order? Not long ago a column of smoke, black and lurid, hung over a certain section of the city of Boston. A row of warehouses was on fire. It was the work of incendiaries. Who are incendiaries? They are men without the fear of God in their hearts, and without faith in the reality of his presence, or in his justice and mercy and love. Is it not a public service, then, to support the Church, inasmuch as it maintains that spirit of religion, without which there is likely to be neither patriotism, nor honesty, nor order?

How can we support the Church without going to church? We may contribute to its finances, but to make its influence felt, must we not participate personally in its work, and share personally its responsibilities?

Go to Church for the Sake of the Children.

If the influences of religion are vital to the best citizenship, should they not be instilled into the minds of those who are to become citizens?

"Train the children," said Thomas Jefferson, "and what is impossible for us, will be easy for them." But, unless we take an interest in religion, it can hardly be expected that our children will do so.

Is it not a mistake to imagine it is enough to send them to Sunday School, while we ourselves stay at

home to read the paper? If we do not value religion, they will not value it. They will go to Sunday School filled with the idea that they need not take it seriously; and in such a mood of mind they will find little good there.

Is not the consequence sure to be that our children will grow up irreligious, without that strength to endure misfortune, that power to resist temptation, that sense of responsibility and of loyalty to the right, which a sincere religious faith alone can give?

For the sake, then, of the coming generation, for the sake of the children, the Church deserves our strenuous, our faithful, our *personal* support.

FOUNDER OF CHRISTENDOM

By Goldwin Smith

Size, 5 1-8 x 7 1-2; pages, 44; price, 50 cents *net;* postage, 4 cents.

THIS little book is remarkable as the clear, concise, and masterful presentation of the character and mission of the Founder of Christianity from the point of view of an eminent historian. Without religious bias, with unprejudiced interpretation of facts, by a calm logic that does not suffer shipwreck on a sunken theological reef, the author, known on two continents for his scholarly attainments, presents to us a view of the Man of Galilee that wins by the charm of its simple, human, and rational appeal. Here we see a man of commanding nobility stripped of ecclesiastical glamour, a leader who leads through the power of triumphant virtue and unselfish consecration to a great work, as drawn by one who, in sympathy with his intense humanity, looks upon the Nazarene as the highest type yet achieved by the race. It is not too much to say that in brief compass one cannot find a more sane, helpful, and really inspiring interpretation of a life so potent throughout the centuries.

MAN JESUS, THE

By John W. Chadwick

Size, 4 3-4 x 7; pages, 258; price, 75 cents *net;* postage, 8 cents.

AN endeavor, "with the help of many eminent scholars, to write a book which shall contribute something to a rational understanding of the human greatness of Jesus in the minds of those who have not the time or opportunity to read those voluminous writings in which the modern study of the life of Jesus has embodied its conjectures and results." The sources of information concerning Jesus and the general place and time of his career are carefully and fully examined, followed by a consideration of his youth and training, the development of his character and work. Subsequent chapters deal with Jesus as Prophet and Messiah, and finally with the questions of resurrection and deification. In simple, direct language, the grandeur of Jesus' humanity is here portrayed with warm sympathy and rare insight.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 Beacon Street, Boston

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FORM OF BEQUEST.

I give and bequeath to the American Unitarian Association, a corporation established by law in the State of Massachusetts, the sum of.....dollars.

[No. 120]

THE

SIMPLIFICATION OF LIFE.

BY

REV. SAMUEL M. CROTHERS, D.D.

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
BOSTON.

Our Faith.

The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
Salvation by Character.
The Progress of Mankind,
onward and upward forever.

Typical Covenant of a Unitarian Church.

In the love of the truth, and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

Our Declaration

(*As expressed in the By-Laws of the American Unitarian Association*).

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*As expressed by the National Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man.

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE SIMPLIFICATION OF LIFE.

"Covet earnestly the best gifts." — 1 Corinthians xii, 31.

"Grant me, O Lord, to know that which is worth knowing and to love that which is worth loving." — *Imitation of Christ.*

When we meet certain persons we feel that they are suffering from spiritual and intellectual starvation; there seems such meagreness in their opportunity, such narrowness in their thought and feeling. They are people who are shut in without any outlook upon the great world. And so, when we desire to help, our instinct is to enlarge their thought, to greaten their opportunity. That is indeed a gracious mission, a mission to those who are shut in, or to those who are shut out. It is the impulse which takes one with books to lonely places, with new thoughts to those who suffer from the lack of intellectual stimulus. All that belongs to liberalism has this function, — to give to those who are half starved that which shall feed their souls.

But there are others — and among them perhaps the majority of those to whom I speak to-day — who do not suffer in this way, but who find the real difficulty in another direction: not that they have too little opportunity, but that they are conscious of too little power and too little time to make use of such opportunities as come to them. Their feeling — shall I not rather say our feeling — is that of those who are perplexed and bewildered. Finding ourselves in a world too large for our comprehension, finding ourselves challenged by

tasks that are too big for us, the opening of a larger world comes to us almost as a mockery. So much to do, so many things to learn, such an infinitude of possibility; and yet, when we come back to our own lives, how little of all this can we really take in! How small a portion of our heritage do we really grasp! Of all the great works, how little, after all, can our hands perform! The fulness of life, the multiplicity of its engagements, the magnitude of its tasks, — all these appall us.

> "What shelter to grow ripe is ours,
> What leisure to grow wise!"

The most pathetic thing about our modern life is the revelation which it gives of multitudes who are overburdened, who are tired even of good and great things. The message that has come to us as if it were a gospel is the great word, "all things are yours."

> "All the good the past has had,
> Remains to make our own time glad,"

we say. But does it make our own time glad, this haunting sense of a good we have not personally grasped, of the wisdom and truth all around us, but disorderly to our mind? Does this make us glad, does it not bring rather the feeling of those who labor and are heavy laden, and who long, above all things on earth, for simplicity, directness, peace?

I fancy that when the historical student looks back upon the religion of our generation, one of the most interesting things that he will observe will be that spontaneous movement growing up outside of all churches and all theological schools, that is called "Christian Science." Large numbers of intelligent people have broken away from the trammels of Orthodoxy, and have come to see some principles which are the basis of universal religion. They have come to see

that God is not far off, but an indwelling power, and that the consciousness of that power means life and peace. They have come to believe, not in a special, but in a universal, revelation. One would suppose that this would result in freedom from all external dictation. But as a matter of fact, the first use these people make of their freedom is to give it up. After asserting the healing power of thought, they yield themselves with perfect docility to the thought of one person. They find comfort in repeating over and over certain designated forms of words which are meant to guide their thoughts. The philosophical historian, asking the reason for all this, might well declare it to be characteristic of the age. Each age asks, What shall I do to be saved? but the real fear now is not as it once was, the wrath of an angry God. People are seeking salvation from an unquiet spirit. They are perplexed and they long for peace. They are overburdened and they desire to be saved from weakness and faint-heartedness. There is a pathetic desire for whatever ministers to peace of mind. It is because people find the world too great and many-sided that they yield themselves so easily to any one who seems to reduce everything to simplicity. Wearied with its own speculations, the tired soul cries: "Tell me the old, old story. Tell it to me as you would tell it to a little child, so that I may repeat the very words, and in that find comfort and help."

We talk of freedom in religion, of the larger thought, of the wider horizon, but in our heart of hearts we are often afraid to trust ourselves to the amazing variety of God's revelation. It is so easy to lose our way. The strongest minds may indeed rejoice in the thought of being, "In Godhead lost, in Godhead found;" but most of us are really afraid lest we be lost, even in a uni-

verse that we believe to be divine. And if we are to have anything like a free religion, the untrammelled search for truth, and the natural development of our spiritual life, we must meet this difficulty, that comes to us when the world, even the spiritual world, seems too great for us. We cannot know everything, we cannot believe everything, we cannot do everything. How may we come back to something of the serenity that belonged to a more primitive life and to a narrower faith?

I think we have already come to see that the real difficulty in making a truly liberal religion permanent lies not in the sphere of the intellect, but in that of the will, in the faculty of choice. It is easy to get people to believe that God is everywhere; it is easy to get them emotionally aroused to the sense of being in a divine universe. It is very difficult to make this faith truly practical, to make it seen in the integrity of life, in the joy of experience, in real decisions of character. In this great world, where all things are ours potentially, shall they be ours actually? That is the question for us. Where shall we, as individuals, find our strength? How shall we enter into our own spiritual heritage? That is a matter of choice. Freedom means that more and more the realm of choice is to be extended, — in life, in education, in action. But this is mere mockery if we have not trained ourselves to choose, and if we have not some principle of our own for wise and effective choice. It is a matter of spiritual economy. Edmund Burke, in his "Letter to a Noble Lord," defines economy. He says, "Economy is a distributive virtue and consists not in saving, but in selection. It shuts the door to impudent importunity, only to open another and a wider door to unpresuming merit." True economy shuts one door only in order that it may open

another. In the realm of our own desire we must find that which, if we are to be free, must lead us at last each one into his own heritage.

There is a very simple rule for every one of us that reduces the perplexity of our lives. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Cultivate that "distributive virtue" that rejects not merely the positively bad, but that casts aside the lesser for the greater good. Give up the vain desire of knowing everything; ask yourself at every step, "What is the thing most worth knowing? What is most worth doing?" Do that, and be not troubled though many other possible tasks remain undone. Learn to do without what is unessential. That is the condition of doing joyfully and effectively that which is essential. The man in his work, in his study, in his friendship, must bring everything to this simple test, "Is this the best thing for me at this moment? I am living in a world where I cannot know or do everything; I must choose. Of the two interests which challenge my attention to-day, I must choose the greater thing. Which one is worth my effort?" Step by step that man's life and thought grow simple, and he comes to be serene in the midst of all distractions.

That is the only way by which we can make use of the past, by which we can get into real sympathy with all the different kinds of religion or of goodness that have been in the world. We ask, for instance, why it is that so few people to-day read the Bible. One reason is that they so quickly become confused and lose their way. Modern scholarship has shown that the Bible is a composite work. Many kinds of literature, conflicting theories, different stages of moral and spiritual development, are represented. One can no longer say of any particular doctrine that it is "scriptural;" its contradiction may easily be found within

the covers of the same book. The teaching of James does not agree with that of Paul, nor is the standpoint of Micah the same as that of the book of Leviticus. Moreover, the modern reader is continually coming upon wonder-stories that to him are incredible, upon theories that have been outgrown, rabbinical arguments that are no longer cogent. What is the way out? It is to give up once for all the search for some consistent system that is "scriptural;" and to ask the simpler question, "Is there anything in these old scriptures that is true and inspiring?" If there is we want to find it.

The true way of reading the Bible, for spiritual profit, involves selection. We turn to it for something which we need, and finding that we let the rest go. It was thus that Jesus read the Old Testament. Turn to the Gospel of Luke, and you read how Jesus went into the synagogue and "There was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book and found the place where it is written, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'" Then we are told how "he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him, and all bare witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." And what beautiful words those were that Jesus read in that synagogue of Nazareth, and how exactly they express the message which he had to give! Why, the people did not know that there were such gracious words in the old prophets. When Jesus had read the words, "the acceptable year of the Lord, he closed the

book and sat down;" closed the book in the middle of the sentence. But if he had continued, what would he have read? "And the day of vengeance of our God." That would not have been a very gracious word, it wouldn't have expressed the thought of Jesus, though it was part and parcel of the thought of the old prophet. "The day of the Lord," to the old prophets, was indeed a day of glad tidings to their own nation, but it was a day of vengeance upon all others. Jesus chose the best things; he chose the words that had in them eternal life, and all the rest were forgotten. He took, as by instinct, the thing which belonged to him. He fulfilled that in a larger and more beautiful way than the prophets ever dreamed. He made the words to mean not the prophecy of vengeance, but a prophecy of the reign of perfect love and peace.

You want to get simple, clear, universal religion? You cannot get it by any patchwork, saying to yourself, "Now I am going to study a little Buddhism, then a little Calvinism, now a little Liberalism. There is truth in all these things; by putting them all together I can find a broader religion." Confusion worse confounded can be the only result of that. But suppose you do not try to do that at all. Suppose you ask yourself simply this: "What, to me, is the best and highest conception of religion? What is the best gift a man can have?" When you are looking only for the best you pass lightly over wearisome controversies, but you come at last to great utterances that arrest your attention. Take, for instance, the words of the old prophet: "What doth God require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" At this your heart kindles. You say, "I can believe that; that is true religion." Now with that thought to guide, look back over the actual course of

religion. You read the old Roman Stoics, you read some great text of the Chinese philosophers; there was no spiritual rapture there, but you are delighted, because, you say, "Those men were trying to do justly. Righteousness was their religion. In just so far as they were seeking that, they are in the line of my religion. I am trying to fulfil what they sought. I may not know very much about Oriental religion, but I take up some story of the Buddha, so tender, so extravagant almost, in its humanity, and I say: There lived in India a man who loved mercy, and in so far as he loved mercy, and in so far as he taught those about him to love mercy, he was in the same line with Jesus of Nazareth who went about doing good. He was one of the forerunners of that larger philanthropy which is such an inspiration in our own day." You read it and you don't care for its limitations any more. You just get that one thing, and in getting that one thing you get the best thing.

"To walk humbly before God," that is not all there is in religion; it is not all that is possible in human development. You have learned the beauty of a life that is clear-eyed, as well as humble, but though lowliness of heart may not be all, it yet is an important part. You love the men of true humility, and long to know them better. All the old saints and the hermits and the men of narrow thought but beautiful desire, all those who "even in the charnels of the dead heard the murmur of the fountain-head," all are yours and you love them, and you find in your religion a fulfilment of their hope.

And do you go further, do you begin to perceive some new virtue or new grace? The moment you perceive it, the moment you see that it belongs to the best life, then you begin to look for its antecedents. You come

to sympathize with all the endeavors after it that have been made, even where, for the time, they seemed to fail. It is in that sense of sympathetic appreciation that all things are ours. All things are ours just in proportion as we ourselves become inspired by a great desire for the *best* things. They are ours in their impulse and in their direction. So Christianity gathered into itself not the outward form of Judaism, but its inner spirit and its deeper meaning. So each larger form of Christianity, each greater faith, in so much as it is greater, gathers into itself the secret life and power of all that has gone before. Suppose a person simply lives in that way. He seeks earnestly in his readings to find the best things out of the best books. Is not that the key to the treasures of literature? He tries to obey the advice of Emerson, to interpret every creed by that in it which is best. Is not that the way out of the region of futile controversy into the peace of a universal religion? He carries the same spirit into daily life and learns what Thomas à Kempis meant when he said, "If thine heart were inwardly pure, then every creature would be to thee a mirror and a book of holy doctrine." Every creature would tell something of the unity that is God. Everything would give some reflection of the highest.

No greater mistake is ever made than that which divides the ideal purpose from the practical life. Only through an ideal that is pure and simple can we live in this world in such a way as to discover its beauty and appropriate its truth.

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